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YET FORGING

THEIR OWN

CHAINS.

C.M. CORNWALL





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FREE, YET FORGING THEIR
OWN CHAINS.

BY
C. M. CORNWALL.

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CONTENTS.



CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST BLOW.....	7
---------------------	---

CHAPTER II.

A MINER'S GRIEVANCE.....	25
--------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

AN AGREEABLE SURPRISE....	38
---------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

A DAY OF REST.....	47
--------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.....	62
--------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

A RUDE AWAKENING.....	76
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW CONSPIRATOR.....	94
------------------------	----

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.....	108
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX.

A RIDE FOR LIFE.....	129
----------------------	-----

CHAPTER X.

A MISERABLE DEATH-BED.....	149
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

A SCENE OF DESOLATION.....	164
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.


THE SCHOOL ON THE MOUNTAIN.....	179
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.	
THE WOLF AT THE DOOR.....	194
CHAPTER XIV.	
THE FLOODS ARE UPON US.....	203
CHAPTER XV.	
A TARDY LOVER.....	216
CHAPTER XVI.	
A COWARDLY ATTACK.....	232
CHAPTER XVII.	
CHECKMATED.....	243
CHAPTER XVIII.	
PLOTS AND COUNTER-PLOTS.....	262
CHAPTER XIX.	
A NARROW ESCAPE.....	273
CHAPTER XX.	
FRESH DANGERS THREATEN.....	283
CHAPTER XXI.	
UNMASKED.....	292
CHAPTER XXII.	
A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE.....	301
CHAPTER XXIII.	
DISASTER.....	312
CHAPTER XXIV.	
BENEATH THE SURFACE.....	327
CHAPTER XXV.	
A LEAP IN THE DARK.....	340
CHAPTER XXVI.	
DISCOVERY.....	354
CHAPTER XXVII.	
THE CURTAIN FALLS.....	365

FORGING THEIR OWN CHAINS.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST BLOW.

T was just about noon on a bright cold day in February, when a passenger-train swept slowly round the curve of the mountain, and drew up at the station of a town in one of the richest coal regions of Pennsylvania.

The little crowd in waiting rushed forward, and there was the usual hurry and pushing, among those wishing to alight and those about to take the train. Among the last to reach the platform, was a young lady, whose manner showed her to be a stranger in that region.

She was richly but plainly dressed in a dark cloth suit, over which she wore a seal-skin jacket, that in the heated car had been thrown back, and was not yet fastened closely about her throat. Her muff and jaunty cap were of the same rich material, and the hand that grasped her traveling-bag was delicately gloved. She looked about, as if expecting some one to meet her, as she pushed carelessly by the hackmen, who were bidding for their several establishments ; then said to one

more persistent than the rest: "Do you know if Mr. Gordon's sleigh is here?"

The man shouted to a comrade nearer the street, "Say, Bill, is Gordon's team down?"

"No; but they's coming."

Just then a handsome span of black horses came prancing up in front of the station, with a large sleigh, whose high cushioned seats were covered with white bear-skin robes, their red linings sweeping lightly the freshly fallen snow. As it stopped, a young man, throwing the robes carelessly aside, sprang out, leaving a lady still seated, and came forward with a rapid step. Meeting the young traveler, he exclaimed, "Welcome, sister Julia, pardon our not being here to receive you. The train is early, or they have changed their time."

"How is Grace?" asked Julia.

"Very well. Here she is. Give me your checks."

Julia sprang into the sleigh, and threw her arms around her sister's neck as she rose to meet her. Eager kisses were exchanged, and Grace Gordon, holding her sister off a little, exclaimed, "Why, Julia, you are still 'ma petite;' you have not grown a bit in the four years you have been abroad. You have improved wonderfully though; not pretty, exactly; but stylish, and all that sort of thing."

"Fascinating, why don't you add," said Gordon, who now joined them.

"I don't doubt she will prove so, and I shall be

eclipsed entirely. However, I have no fears that you or baby Frank will prove disloyal. And the rest, my dear, I willingly resign."

"Thanks for your generous offer," said Julia, taking a seat by her side. "But I can give a more unqualified compliment. You are certainly prettier than when the belle of our circle ; although a sedate matron, way out in this wilderness."

"'Wasting her sweetness on the desert air,' I presume you think," said Gordon. "I believe in your love for Grace, if it could bring you here so soon after your arrival in New York, and at this season of the year. But I can assure you we are civilized, some of us at least."

Julia gave a half-provoked glance at her brother-in-law, as she replied, "I am sorry if you thought I had any reluctance to come. The quiet of a country home, if it were not my sister's, would be agreeable, after the constant change of our last year abroad. But my city friends seemed to think me a fit subject for an insane retreat, to go to the country now."

"We will try to prevent your becoming melancholy, my dear," said Grace. "Although I cannot promise a fête every night ; there are some gayeties in prospect I think you will enjoy."

"Surely, what can be more exhilarating than sleigh-riding? It is the poetry of motion set to the music of these merry bells. You can give me no better treat than enough of this."

They had left the town and were riding rapidly along a road following the windings of the river now ice-bound, and covered, as all else, with snow. Soon they crossed a bridge, and made a sharp turn, bringing them in view of a large, black coal-breaker and great culm-pile, where fresh snow and black dust made a marked contrast. Beyond were rows of small dark houses, with a little white paint defining the windows, like the iris of a negro's eye. Some were neat and clean, with little yards in front, while others bore every evidence of wretchedness and filth.

A number of men, women and children were gathered in little groups, and on the porch of one house, larger than the others, were three or four men in eager discussion.

They paused and watched, as the sleigh turned to the right, avoiding nearer approach to the colliery. Julia noticed the sullen expression on their countenances, and asked, "What's the matter? Why are those men idle?"

"They are on a strike," replied Gordon. "There has been no work done all through these coal regions since January."

"What made them strike?"

"Why, the operators have immense amounts of coal ready to ship. But there is little or no market for it, as business is so dull. It was a great deal better for us to be idle than pay such large wages ;

so we told the men they must take ten per cent less, or stop work. Their Union advised them to stop, so there they are, the only sufferers by their folly. We can stand it as long as they can."

"I wonder who has the right of it," said Julia half musing, as from her comfortably cushioned seat she looked back at the small cheerless cottages. "They must have a hard life. Think of working all through the bright days far under ground! I should want large pay."

"But, my dear sister," said Grace, "the market supply and demand must regulate this, as all other trades. Frank says that these men would get as good wages as any who work with their hands now; but they won't see it, and are bound to 'stand for their rights,' as they call them."

"But what about their poor families meanwhile?" asked Julia.

"They must take the consequences, and perhaps that will bring them to reason sooner," replied Gordon with a shrug.

Their road now ascended a high hill. Near its summit they drove through a broad gateway, and followed a winding avenue, lined with fine large trees, and dark clumps of cedars, frosted with feathery snowflakes, that had fallen during the night. After a little they emerged in front of a large stone house, whose straight lines were broken

by verandas, balconies and bay windows, covered nearly to the roof with vines, now holding snow-wreaths, instead of leaves. Pausing in front of the steps, Grace sprang out, and held a hand to Julia, saying,

“Welcome, little sister, to Cedar Ridge.”

“So this is ‘the lodge in a wilderness’ you wrote me about,” said Julia, as, turning round, she viewed the wide prospect. “How beautiful this ‘boundless continuity of space’ must be, when clothed with verdure under the lights and shadows of a June day.”

“Yes, you must see our mountains in summer. But, come in; I am anxious to show you my boy. He is worth more than these hills, with all their black diamonds.”

As the door closed behind them, it seemed like entering the tropics. The soft warm air was laden with fragrance from rare and costly plants that filled the sunny bay windows, while birds, whose cages were almost concealed among luxuriant vines, trilled their merry song, unconscious of winter blasts.

With only an appreciative glance at the beautiful rooms opening upon the wide hall, Julia followed her sister to the apartment prepared for her. A bright fire glowed in the grate, and threw a warm light over the dark blue covering of the furniture. Easy chairs were drawn up in front of it;

and on a table a tête-a-tête tea service, and preparations for lunch, gave an inviting home-welcome to the traveler.

Grace drew her sister to the fire, and began removing her wraps. As they stood thus, few would have supposed that so near a relationship existed between them. Grace was a perfect blonde, with large blue eyes, and regular features, that were almost lifeless in their repose; unusually tall, with just sufficient fullness to give her matronly dignity: Julia small and slight; with a face that at times was decidedly ordinary, but which, under excitement, would flush into a beauty of color and expression that astonished and even dazzled the beholder. In character also they were as dissimilar. Grace was quiet and gentle, loving her husband and child with much devotion, but undemonstrative and not quick in her perceptions, or possessed of much intellectual taste or ability. Julia was full of energy in word and manner, keen in her analysis of character; but impulsive and heedless, apparently showing every thought on the surface, yet with an underlying stratum of strength and reserve, of which she herself was hardly conscious.

Grace and Julia Earle were orphans, and heiresses to a large property left to the guardianship of a wealthy uncle in New York. Julia was five years younger than Grace, and for three years had been at school in France. When Grace married Frank

Gordon, their uncle at her request resigned the care of her property to her husband, and with his family went abroad. Julia had spent the last year traveling with them in Europe. She had just returned, and was visiting her sister for the first time in her married home.

Grace having placed Julia in a comfortable chair before the glowing fire, said: "Now I am going to bring my baby, and then we will have lunch. We dine at six, when I will introduce you to the family circle, but I want you all to myself at first."

In a few moments she returned with a fine large boy, having his mother's fair skin and blue eyes. After a great amount of petting, he was again resigned to the nurse's care, and the sisters drew their chairs closer, for a long confidential chat.

"You speak of your family circle. Pray, whom does it include besides Mr. Gordon? You forget I have been away since all these new ties were formed, and you are such a poor correspondent," said Julia.

"Well, it is larger this winter than usual. You know Frank had a step-mother living, and Mr. Hunt, Frank's partner, was her son by a former marriage."

"I didn't know it till now. Are they both with you?"

"Yes. The old lady is not particularly agreeable. She is afflicted with nerves and a strong

imagination. She is also a walking medical dictionary, and knows the name of every pain and ache, and at some time or other has had them all. She requires a great deal of attention, and at present has a cousin staying here, who waits upon her whims, out of consideration for the valuable presents she receives. Miss Ada Hunt is a beautiful brunette, a fine musician, and very agreeable."

"How about Mr. Hunt?"

"Oh! I know you will like him. Indeed, I have set my heart on your marrying him, and settling down here by me."

"I must say, that is a summary way of deciding matters," laughed Julia.

"I think it will be your own fault, if it is not thus decided."

"‘I came, I saw, I conquered.’ You would compare me to the invincible Cæsar, but I imagine an old bachelor will not be so easily vanquished. Why hasn’t the fascinating Miss Hunt made him captive?"

"Oh! they are cousins, free and easy in their intercourse; but nothing more, I assure you. Indeed, I think there is an ‘*affaire du cœur*’ in progress between her and Maurice Graham, the superintendent of our colliery."

"Who is he?"

"Oh, a poor friend of Uncle John Gordon’s. He wanted Frank to give him that position."

Frank and Mr. Hunt are engaged in other things beside. Mr. Hunt is a splendid business man. He is president of the bank in town, and director of one or two railroads; indeed, there is no prominent enterprise of which he is not head and front. Frank says he has wonderful talent that way, and has made a large fortune. He trusts him implicitly."

"Oh dear, I shall be afraid to speak before such a wonderful financier. Uncle says I can't add up the cost of my dresses for one year."

"Never mind, as long as you've the dresses. Men don't want women to bother their heads about business. He can talk as graceful nonsense as you can desire."

"Thank you for the implied compliment. But here are my trunks. I will show you what I brought from Paris."

During the rest of the afternoon the sisters were absorbed in the mysteries of dress and jewelry, and did not heed the flight of time till the dinner-bell rang.

When, after a hasty toilet, Julia descended to the dining-room, the impression she produced was not very favorable. She was suffering from a nervous headache, which made her pale, heavy-eyed and spiritless; and acting, as usual, according to her mood, she made no effort to be agreeable. The presence of a comparative stranger with such a

disposition is a wet blanket to all sociability. It was a great relief when the tedious formality of dinner was over, and they could return to the parlor. Here, Grace asked Ada Hunt to favor them with music, and contrived to place her sister on a tête-a-tête sofa with Hunt, hoping they would thus get better acquainted, while she was occupied in the nursery.

But Hunt, not finding Julia inclined to conversation, soon joined Graham at the piano. This was just what she desired, and she began making careful observations of the circle into which she was to be thrown for some weeks. The old lady she recognized as a poor hypochondriac, ready to inflict upon any one the full history of her maladies. Her she resolved to shun. Next, Mr. Gordon, her brother-in-law, passed under a stricter scrutiny. He was not tall; Grace had the advantage of him in height. His features were refined and rather handsome, but lacking in force. This was seen in his whole attitude, and the slight tremble of the white, nerveless hand that held the daily paper he was reading. Julia wondered that her sister should have selected him from her numerous admirers. Yet she remembered that her uncle had loudly applauded the choice, and that he told her, Frank Gordon was considered a very desirable match in their circle, as he belonged to an aristocratic family in Philadelphia, and was the reputed heir of his

rich old uncle, John Gordon, who owned the colliery and residence where they were living, and advanced the capital to work the mines.

Then she turned to Hunt, and he suited her fancy better. He was tall and well-proportioned, full of the vigor of manhood. His black hair and heavy mustache and beard made a peculiar contrast to the rest of his face, which was unusually pale. She could not decide on the color of his eyes, they were so changeable. Her gaze passed from him to the lady at the piano, and while acknowledging her beauty and rare gifts, she felt an instinctive antagonism toward her, and was sure that beneath her velvet exterior were sharp claws. She had caught a gleam shot at her from under the long black eye-lashes, when Hunt was trying to play the agreeable after dinner; and had watched her lures to draw him away, apparently not content with the open admiration young Graham lavished upon her.

Julia paid little attention to him, having casually pronounced him an ordinary young man, very much in love with a girl who was amusing herself at his expense. Was she flirting with Hunt also, or was that a serious game? At all events, Julia determined on the morrow to enter the lists with her. She had no intention of carrying out her sister's plans. But it would be good sport, and be something to boast of to her city friends. She

had heard of him as not at all a ladies' man, and they seemed to think it such a feather in their cap if he showed them any attention when mingling in their circles. So she resolved to see what she could do with him. They had all put her down as stupid and possessing only solid charms to recommend her. She would show them by and by they were mistaken ; for she had great faith in her power of witchery. Having reached this conclusion, she arose and bade them good night, pleading fatigue as her excuse for leaving so early.

Soon after she retired, Henry Hunt left the piano and crossing the hall to a small library, shut the door, went to the secretary, and drew out from one of its drawers a box of fine "Havanas." Then selecting one he threw himself down into an easy-chair in front of the grate, and gave himself up to thought.

After a few moments, taking the cigar in his fingers, he allowed the fragrant smoke to curl around his head and muttered, "So that's the heiress. A stupid, namby-pamby school-girl, who hasn't even her sister's good looks to recommend her. Compare her with that splendid creature in there, singing like an angel ! Poor foolish Graham is no doubt worshiping her, for one. But if ever the tempter appeared in female guise, he has certainly tried hers. She is deep as the ocean, and quite as remorseless. I think I know her pretty

well, and the game she is playing. I believe, without vanity, I can claim what heart she does possess. By Jove, if she only had that chit's wealth, I'd soon sweep such puppy lovers as Graham out of my path. How gloriously beautiful she is to-night ! She shows to best advantage when playing and singing, which is generally the reverse with other performers. Her white fingers flash over the keys, and words flow from her lips, just parted enough to show the little white teeth, as if it were no more effort than for the birds to trill ; yet the power and pathos of her voice have drawn tears to the eyes of even such a hardened sinner as I. What wonder Graham's heart is melted out of him ! I could pity him were he not living in paradise now. Bah ! I wonder if I can learn to endure that block of stupidity up stairs. Perhaps she'll get enough beauty sleep to-night to make her more presentable."

Just then his thoughts were interrupted by the door opening, and Frank Gordon entered.

"Hallo !" said Hunt. "You are just the man I wanted to see. I've finished my cigar. Pity you don't like to smoke ; it is a splendid resource when business is dull."

"Ours is dull enough, in all conscience. How do things stand, to-day ?"

"Bad. See here, Gordon, you've got to take up your wife's money, lying idle in the bank now, or

in a day or two our notes go to protest, and there will be a grand crash. I can't push off this result much longer; our credit won't bear it. We must have cash down."

"O Hunt! can't it be raised in any other way? I have already used twenty thousand of her principal in our operations, not yet restored. Now to take fifteen thousand more, my conscience won't allow it."

"Humph! your conscience didn't trouble you when we made a hundred thousand clear in our wise investment in oil, last year. You doubled your wife's income then. Now, when I've labored for your interests and Grace's as truly as my own, and times have changed, and money is tight, and these confounded strikes' put a deadlock on our regular business, you refuse to loan the firm a few paltry thousands to keep up our credit, till I can bring those stocks to the right figure to sell out with a handsome margin. You seem to regard your business reputation as of no importance. Of course, you will have your wife's property to fall back on, and perhaps the old governor will overlook the mistakes of his nephew, out of respect to his misfortunes. But don't be too sure of the old foggy: you know how severe he is on operations outside of your legitimate business. You and I have been in too many schemes together to show a very clean record," said Hunt in a

freezing tone, while a bitter sneer curled his lip.

Gordon bowed his head on the table and groaned.

"Now see here, Frank," resumed Hunt, in a quiet friendly manner, 'there's no sense in your making such a fuss over this matter. We only borrow the money a few weeks to help us over these hard times, then pay back principal and interest. Grace has given you full power of attorney, and trusts you implicitly. I think you might have a little confidence in me. I have never left you in a tight place yet, and have helped you out of a good many scrapes, first and last. I have not failed in my ventures heretofore, and if we can only tide over these obstacles now, we will go on swimmingly. If we can pay down that fifteen thousand prompt tomorrow, they'll think old Gordon is backing us, and our credit and that stock will go up like a balloon.'

"Well, I suppose I must, but the firm shall give her security; and remember, Hunt, this is the last cent of hers I use, if we both go to the devil."

"All right. I'll see that she is protected, if you will draw me a check for that little amount, and we won't visit the old gentleman's quarters yet," and a malicious sparkle shone in Hunt's eyes, as he passed a blank check to his companion. "As soon

as I get these matters settled up, to-morrow, I'll be off to New York. I know two or three chaps on Wall street who will take some of that stock. Their name will help us here. When up a little higher we will sell out entirely, since you are so shaky; but I assure you it is a safe speculation and we will double our money. Good-night now. I must follow Miss Earle's example and get my beauty-sleep this end of the night."


The two men parted and Gordon slowly mounted the stairs, revolving in his mind what he had done. This was not the first time he had thus used his wife's property; but while luck was with them he flattered himself he was making judicious investments for her. Now that the tide of fortune had turned and bankruptcy stared them in the face, he began to realize that he was involving what was committed as a sacred trust in schemes that his uncle would at least call very questionable.

As he entered his room, a softly shaded lamp revealed the beautiful features of his wife, slightly flushed in peaceful slumber, while on her outstretched arm lay her boy; his cheeks rosy, his golden hair curling in close rings around his moist forehead, and one little dimpled arm thrown about his mother's neck. Gordon for a moment felt like a miserable thief, stealing the inheritance of wife and child. Then all Hunt's sophistries came back,

and he thought of the mortification failure would cause her, as well as himself. This one venture more would save them; then, her property should be entirely withdrawn from the firm.

CHAPTER II.

A MINER'S GRIEVANCE.

RANK GORDON was no financier, nor had he any strong points in his character. From boyhood Hunt was the master spirit, and Frank, without being fully conscious of it, had been completely controlled by his companion's stronger will. Yet apparently all the good gifts of fortune had fallen upon Gordon. He was a beautiful boy, the only one in a large family circle, and he had been petted and surfeited with attention all his life. His father died when he was about fourteen, and he passed over to the guardianship of his uncle John, a crotchety old bachelor, immensely rich, but in Hunt's opinion full of obsolete notions, very opposite to the advanced stage of the world.

Hunt had inherited only a few hundred dollars from his own father. His step-father died suddenly, making no provision for him. Mr. John Gordon saw that he was a shrewd fellow, and resolved to give him a good education and keep him with Frank. They seemed fond of each other, and he trusted that Hunt would look out that Frank's

good-nature was not imposed on. From boyhood Hunt had been a schemer. He had been brought up in the midst of wealth owned by others. Educated in luxurious tastes, and indulged and petted by a weak mother, he had always been cramped for means, and resolved that the one object of his life should be to get rich, no matter how. He had seen what an "open sesame" money was to all the good things of life. In his youth he had often been snubbed, when young Gordon was flattered and caressed, while he was conscious that mentally he was his superior. So he took his revenge by using his strong influence with Frank to work out his own ends. During their college days he had drawn him into many a scrape to suit his own convenience or amusement ; and had then taken great credit to himself for extricating him, as Frank's wits were not keen enough to discover what a dupe he had been.

This plan had been followed by Hunt all through their business. Gordon was naturally averse to exertion, and learned to depend upon his partner more and more. In the years of inflation following the war they had been unusually successful in their speculations. Hunt never let Gordon fully into his schemes, for the latter was troubled with a conscience, that was not strong enough to resist temptation. He feared the risk of detection, not of their dishonesty, for he never realized that any of

their transactions could come under that broad censure; but he dreaded the displeasure his uncle would feel if he supposed they were speculating.

Hunt, like all other gamblers, whether in stocks or otherwise, was never satisfied. One successful venture but urged on to another. Now fortune's wheel had taken a wrong turn, but his strong will, and the fascination this sort of risk seems to possess, urged him on. He resolved to risk all in one brilliant *coup*, which he believed would bring him a fortune. Then he would retire among the old nabobs who had patronized his youth. He was not at all fastidious as to the means to accomplish this result; he believed that, if successful, he would escape close scrutiny.

Maurice Graham, the young superintendent, was not displeased when Gordon and Hunt left the parlor to discuss business, and the sole task of entertaining Miss Ada devolved on him.

But she had no intention of allowing him to become too demonstrative, and so offered to sing his favorite songs, well aware that her voice would also reach other ears. He, however, was perfectly content, as he sat by her side, gazing on her beautiful face and drinking in the sweet music. Many of the songs he requested were sacredly associated with mother and home, and were now by her voice made doubly dear. Graham had no sisters, and heretofore had been thrown very little in young ladies'

society. His mother, an educated and refined Christian woman, had taught him to admire and reverence all that was pure and beautiful, and had unconsciously by her consistent life become his standard of true womanhood. Now as he met intimately a fascinating girl like Ada Hunt, it did not require much effort to secure him as her captive.

She read his character, and felt that if she could gain the heart of a man who had not frittered away his power of loving in numerous flirtations, it would be a worthy trophy to lay on the altar of her vanity. She knew it was an ideal character he had enshrined in her lovely outward semblance, and she determined as long as his attentions amused her, or could serve her interests, to keep up the delusion. She was a perfect actress, every word, look and gesture was studied for effect, yet bore that apparent frankness and self-forgetfulness which is the highest art. Before Graham she appeared an amiable, generous girl, who had always been hampered by straightened circumstances from indulging her noble impulses. She claimed to be an ardent church-woman, and attended all services with strict fidelity.

At the time of Julia Earle's arrival Graham would as soon have doubted his mother as this girl.

When she bade him good-night, he was too excited to sleep, and resolved to walk down to the road, where he could see if all was right at the col-

liery. It was a beautiful winter night. The moon, well advanced in its second quarter, made the snow sparkle, and defined the shadows of the trees with a minuteness that revealed every twig. The air was bracing, but not sharp. With a happy heart and buoyant step Graham trod the soft snow, till arrested near the gate by hearing a groan as of one in distress. Moving cautiously forward, he saw a man seated on a stone wall and leaning his head on one of the granite pillars. Laying a gentle hand on his shoulder, he said, "What's the matter, my friend? Are you hurt, or in trouble?"

The man started up wildly, and raised a heavy cudgel as if he would strike the intruder. Graham stepped back quickly, and stood facing him, with his strong cane in a position of defense; then said in a calm, friendly voice, "Why, John Malone, is that the way you treat a friend?"

The stick fell to the ground, and the man muttered, in a sullen tone, "Indade, Mr. Graham, I'll not harm ye; but I'm that starved I must either stale or beg to kape the breath o' life in me."

"I remember you as a good, faithful workman, when in my employ. I suppose you are one of the strikers now, though! Arn't you a Union man, and don't they help you?"

"Well, I niver was a regular member, an' I'd rather be after workin' than layin' round idle. But the rest at No. 4 struck, though I kep' on, till they

scart me wid coffin letters, an' I had to quit. I've a sick wife, niver able to lave her bed all winter. Whin gettin' full wages it were more thin I could do to kape out o' debt. Now I'd nothin' to fall back on. My Billy fell on the ice a week back an' broke his leg, and to-night Mary, me eldest, who did all the work, has cum down wid a faver, an' there's not a scrap in the house to ate or medicine to make 'em better. I've been to the stores, but they won't thrust me any longer. What's left but stalin' or starvin'?"

"No, John; go to work, and earn an honest living."

"Aye, an' be murthered fer tryin'."

"No; if the Union won't help you, they have no right to keep you idle. You come to the colliery to-morrow. I need another fireman, and will give you the work. Meanwhile, here is some money to buy supplies at once."

"God bless ye, sir," said the man, in a broken voice; "I'll cum in the mornin', and do me best, if they'll only let me. Shure, sir," speaking softly, with a cautious look round, "There's hundreds of men would go in the mines to-morrow, if they dared."

"What's to hinder?"

"Well, sir, ye see ache mon is afeared; they don't know who to thrust; and these trades propose to give justice to all, and some don't want to

work, an' are helped to kape idle. The leaders tell the men that you operators are oppressin' them, an' if they stand firm for their roights, they'll git 'em."

"All I can say is that they have taken a wrong method to bring it about, which they will find out to their cost. Good-night, now; you need to hurry for your provisions, before the stores are all closed."

When Graham came down to his office the next morning, he found a crowd of men gathered round it. The engineer and two firemen came forward, while the former said in a sullen, but respectful manner, "We've come to tell you, sir, that we must quit work."

"Are you going to leave the mines to be drowned out?" asked Graham. "Come, my men, don't you see the folly of such a course? Suppose you could get your terms in a few days, if the mines fill you can't go in them for months."

"I can't help that," said the first speaker, doggedly. "You'll have to mind them yourselves. Then perhaps you'll meet our terms a little sooner."

"You are mistaken there. Mr. Hunt, and Mr. Gordon's uncle who owns these mines, have given you their ultimatum. While coal is at the present figure, you must work at the reduction; when it advances, your wages advance. That, to my mind, is a fair and honest proposal, and you would gain

more by it, than spending your hardly saved earnings in a long winter's idleness."

"I believe you, sir," replied the engineer; "I've no wish to quit, for I was laying by a good bit against a rainy day. But you see, in these matters the majority rules, and we have to yield. You're an honest, fair-spoken gentleman, and I believe if all bosses were like you, we'd have no reason to strike."

"I have done my best for you all, as far as I have the power," said Graham; "I have tried to secure you comfortable dwellings, and taken every precaution for your safety while in the mines. And now I think I have a right to expect some consideration for our interests also. The masters have rights as well as the men."

"Rights!" exclaimed a man in the crowd. "Are they suffering hunger or going in rags up yonder?" pointing toward Cedar Ridge.

"Tom Lynch, did Gordon and Hunt ever fail to pay you promptly what you earned?" asked Graham.

"They want me to do that same work for ten per cent less money. What right have these rich oppressors to take that from my wife and children?"

"Now, Tom, just reverse the case and suppose you were a rich man, who owned one of these mines, and the longer you continued working the

less it paid. Would you keep on, or stop? Your common-sense and self-interest would tell you to stop. This is our position ; but we say to the men, that would be turning you out of work in mid-winter ; your Union urges you to strike, and makes you believe that you will be better off for months of idleness. Who can endure the longest ? —the operator, or you no longer earning what was necessary to meet your daily wants?"

"Oh ! that's the way they all talk. The rich have the power an' mane to kape, it if we're trodden in the dust. But we'll show 'em the viper can sting the heel that grinds it down, even a deadly bite," replied a man named Bill McQuaid.

Graham's anger was rising, at the fellow's insolent manner. He knew him to be an unprincipled rough, who yet held great influence with the worst class. But, controlling himself, he looked around and replied in a calm but firm voice : " There may be some to whom the vile epithet ' viper ' would apply, but most of you I believe to be honest, reasonable men, seeing this question from your stand-point only, yet bravely enduring privation from adherence to what you believe the welfare of the majority. I respect your fidelity, where it is maintained honorably and without oppression. But when compulsion is used, when a man's freedom of action is denied ; and if he, rather than suffer want or run in debt, is willing to work

for less than his neighbors, but cannot except with risk to his life, then I call it mob law, the worst kind of tyranny. Labor is as much an article of merchandise as coal. When the war made men scarce, and the demand for coal large, you could command high wages. Now times have changed, and there are more men than steady work; but in this country no man need go hungry or in rags. With the wide continent open to him from the Atlantic to the Pacific—with public schools to give him an education—there is no reason why he should not rise, as many another, to the first rank in the land.”

“We’ve got to arn our livin’. We’ve no time for larnin’, an’ we don’t need much, to work underground,” said one in the crowd.

“You seem to have plenty of time on your hands now. Who are your boss miners and engineers, but men who by industry and skill have worked their way up? I know a man who began as a mule-driver, now president of a coal company. But many of you allow your children to run idle in the streets, bringing them up in ignorance and shiftlessness. Then how much of your earnings is spent in poor tobacco, and worse whiskey, that would go far in making your homes comfortable and bringing you on a nearer plane to the rich man you envy.”

“There’s a deal o’ truth in that, sir,” said a

short Scotchman named Dan Malcome. "My brother Ned is one of those who're always at their books or work. He's never failed a good payin' position, and has a nice sum laid by. But I never could save: I'll work as hard as any mon; then I like to enjoy myself; and, somehow, soon the money's all gone."

Boss Malcome is a stingy fellow. He won't join the Union or pay a cent to help us along. The mean cuss will have to quit this in a hurry soon," said Bill McQuaid.

"See here!" said Dan, striding up in front of him, "I'm secretary of the Union down here. We agreed at our meetings that the fires in this colliery shouldn't be stopped." And turning to the others he said, "We know as well as Mr. Graham, that it hurts our interest more than theirs, to let the mines fill. Hadn't these men better keep at work?"

"All right; agreed," responded a majority of voices.

"But, Dan," spoke out one man, "I think your brother ought to join us, an' help those not workin'."

"He don't like the Union; says he got enough of it four years ago, at Scranton. This is a *free* country, a man has a right to do as he pleases. And although he don't spend his money in free drinks, I know there's those here as will testify he

never shirked time or money when they were sick or in trouble. Tom Norey, who watched you through the typhus fever? Who saved those men almost smothered in fire-damp, last November, after he warned them to keep away?"

"He's all right, let him alone. And if these fellows want to work again, let 'em," said a voice, which was indorsed by the better class of men.

So the question was settled. Graham hoped some of the argument he had used might be recalled and have weight with the sober, thinking men. They returned quietly to their homes, but a few drew off into a narrow ravine, and Graham saw from his office window that an exciting discussion was in progress. As he watched, he felt anxious lest fresh mischief might be brewing, and a few worthless roughs might bring more trouble and disgrace on honest men already bearing a heavy load. While thinking thus he descried John Malone, the man he had helped the previous night, coming toward the breaker. He wondered if they would allow him to pass, and resolved that if prevented, he would seek Dan Malcome's influence, himself giving a full statement of his case. But after a short parley, the way was opened, John came on, and was soon quietly doing his work.

Graham then went to the overseer's room, and going up to a powerfully built fellow, with light hair and sandy beard, he laid a hand on his brawny

arm, and said, "Malcome, do you know they threatened to stop the engine this morning, and I fear they would have succeeded, if your brother hadn't interposed!"

"I expected it, sir. Here's a coffin-letter I received. They hope to frighten me into their Union, but I'm not going to have my earnings filched from me by lazy scamps like Bill McQuaid and Sam Walker, with their unmeaning Jack o' Lantern cry of 'stand for yer roights.' I go armed to and from home, and am very cautious. Here I am safe as long as Dan and the better class have the upper hand. But I fear, sir, there is some new scheme in progress. Sam Walker is away, consulting with the Union lower down. The men are becoming very much straitened and are getting restive. I fear there is more trouble ahead."

"I have thought so, too ; but we must keep the pumps going, for their sakes as well as ours. Let me know if anything new occurs. You stand firm by me, and I will be true to you. Now I must go home."

CHAPTER III.

AN AGREEABLE SURPRISE.



R. HUNT was not as successful in his operations in Wall Street as he hoped.

So, finding it might be better to look to other resources for help, he called on Mr. Earle, Grace and Julia's uncle, and made himself so agreeable that he was invited to dine at seven. He was punctual at the hour, and exerted his best powers to please his hosts. When Mrs. Earle retired, the gentlemen drew their chairs closer, lit their cigars, sipped their wine, and discussed the financial questions of the day, and probable issue of events in the future.

It did not require much time for a keen observer like Hunt to take the guage of the man with whom he was talking. He soon found that his greatest anxiety was to secure safe investments for his capital, and especially the trust-money committed to him. He made some wise and careful suggestions, spoke of advice he had given Gordon in regard to his wife's property, and how satisfactory it had proved, and indirectly gave the impression that her fortune was being largely increased by his

judgment guiding Frank. Mr. Earle knew that he was the working partner, and had most of the brains that conducted their business.

Before they parted that night, Hunt had persuaded him to buy considerable stock in a railroad of which he was director, and he left him convinced that he was an exceedingly far-sighted, yet honorable business man. Hunt also felt sure that if he married Julia Earle, her uncle would more readily intrust the care of her property to him, than he had Grace's to her husband.

He resolved that he would secure the young lady as soon as possible.

He did not imagine that this would cause him much difficulty; for it had not required an unusual amount of vanity to convince him, that almost any of the girls he knew would accept an offer from him. When after a few days' absence he rode home on the lightning-train, he really pitied himself very much for being obliged to marry such a homely, stupid girl.

But a surprise was awaiting him. Julia knew that he was to return that night, and in accordance with her plan of entering into rivalry with Ada Hunt, she dressed for dinner with special care. She had excellent taste, and her quick perceptions had caught the Parisian ladies' fitness and delicacy of touch in details. When she entered the dining-room, those who had known her only the past

week scarcely recognized her, yet could not positively define the change. She seemed like a bud that had just burst its green leaves, and was unfolding with a beauty that was as much a promise as a fulfillment.

She met Hunt with a grace and cordiality that both surprised and flattered him. As they gathered around the table, instead of being a damper to sociability, she soon became the life of the circle.

When they were all seated, Gordon asked Hunt, "Is there any important news in the city?"

"None except that Mr. Brown, a prominent politician, you remember, died very suddenly yesterday."

"What was the matter with him, my son?" asked Mrs. Gordon, Sr., in a plaintive voice.

"Heart disease, it was supposed, mother."

"Do you know what the symptoms were? I wonder if it was like an attack I had two years ago. Don't you remember, Henry, how I breathed then?"

"I suppose you did, mother, but I can't recall anything peculiar in the operation. In this case, I should imagine it ossification, for he was a pretty tough old sinner. Yet it's curious now, to see how they are eulogizing his memory, when last week there was no epithet too strong to fling against him. Bah! it's disgusting."

"I don't entirely agree with you," said Graham. "I think it a merciful provision for us all, that, after death, our friends and the world generally, are so willing to forget the mistakes and wrongs of the past, and recall but the good points in our character. There are few so debased as not to have some fine traits."

"Well," said Grace, "I must say, I don't like this universal eulogizing of the dead."

"Oh! it makes little difference how we live. They are sure to send us to Heaven when we die," said Julia, carelessly.

Hunt laughed, but Graham looked up and met her eye steadily, as he replied, "Did it ever occur to you, Miss Earle, that although they may send, Heaven may not accept?"

Julia's eyes fell, and with an uncomfortable shrug of her shoulders, she said, "Really, Mr. Graham, theology was one of the ologies we didn't study at our school."

"I don't doubt you are well up on the others, Miss Earle," said Hunt, with great suavity. "I hope, though, you are not 'deeply, desperately blue.'"

"Oh no. I have only received the fashionable school varnish; I assure you, I am delightfully shallow."

"I should think Mr. Hunt would hardly require that assurance," said Ada, in a sweet voice.

"Oh!" replied Julia, in the same tone, "I thought it was so long since he had seen a school-girl he would need the information."

Hunt laughed outright at this retort; for Ada, although a well preserved beauty, was no longer young, and she knew that no disguise could hide the fact from him. But with a graceful bow to Julia, she replied, "Certainly it is seldom he has such a charming specimen to study."

"Oh, thanks," said Julia, looking up with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, which met an angry gleam in the dark glance bent upon her.

Graham had regarded Julia as a very commonplace girl, and no addition to their circle, but now that she had cast, as he believed, an unwarranted slur upon his lady-love, his indignation knew no bounds. He therefore took pains to draw Ada into a tête-a-tête conversation, and by the gentleness and marked respect in his manner, show her his opinion of Julia's rudeness.

He told her of his encounter with poor John Malone, and the wretchedness and poverty he had found in their cottage. Ada expressed great sympathy, and wished she had it in her power to relieve such want. As Graham listened, he did not realize the time and money spent on the very becoming dresses she wore, and how bitterly she resented the hardness of the lot that compelled her to steal many an hour from sleep, to keep up even an

outward semblance of the rich fashionable ladies with whom she associated.

Julia meanwhile was exceedingly gay, and bursts of laughter bore testimony to her witty descriptions of places she had visited, and people she had met. Hunt's astonishment and gratification increased with every hour. Really, this girl was not so unendurable as he thought! But then he was convinced that she was no fool. Would she readily fall into the trap he was spreading for her, and allow her wealth to be intrusted without question to his care? He was not exactly sure what her marked change of manner meant. But she interested and perplexed him, and was now game that was worth the pursuit.

Ada Hunt had loved her cousin Henry for years. She knew him well enough to be certain that only her want of wealth and his ambition to be rich had stood between them in the past. She heard that he had made a great deal of money since the war, and she hoped now that he would follow the dictates of his heart. Therefore she had come to spend the winter with his mother, believing that if they were thrown constantly together she would gain her old power over him, and the desire of her life be gratified.

She had used Graham's devotion as a foil, and means of arousing jealousy in her cousin, and while knowing as yet nothing of his business perplex-

ities, had discovered some obstacle in her path that her penetration could not reveal. That night the conviction flashed upon her that Hunt was resolved to marry Julia, with the view of securing her fortune. The young lady seemed very willing to receive his addresses, or else was as great a flirt as herself. Which it was she could not tell, but she did not doubt, that, if Julia began in sport, she would end in earnest.

She could listen no longer to Graham, so gradually drew him into the circle gathered around Julia in the parlor, who was still the principal talker.

Ada then tried continually to confuse her and put her into a false position ; but Julia was on the alert, and parried every thrust with good-humored wit. Hunt listened and applauded, till the furies seemed biting at Ada's heart, and she grew almost savage in her animadversions upon Julia's views of music and art, into which the conversation had drifted. Ada spoke eloquently, and showed greater knowledge of the subject than Julia, and she managed to keep the sympathy of Graham with her, often appealing to his opinion, as she found that he also was well informed. She never appeared more beautiful, her cheeks were flushed, and fire flashed from her magnificent black eyes. Julia saw she was no match for her, and beat a retreat as quickly as she could, on the plea of youthful inexperience. Grace came forward and made a diver-


sion by proposing a moonlight sleigh-ride, the first of the week. All entered heartily into the plan, and parted for the night apparently in the best humor.

When Julia entered her room, she threw open the broad casements, and leaned out, to enjoy for a few moments the charming winter landscape. The moon was shining above the white hills opposite, and, looking through bars of fleecy clouds, made of them a silvery veil. But Julia saw also Maurice Graham's form, walking slowly to and fro between the dark cedars, and with an angry flush she recalled his reply to her flippant remarks about Heaven, and it again stung her conscience. She had never been under religious influence, except during her last year at school. Now, as she gazed on the pure snow and solemn starlight, some chain of association brought back to her memory the weeks when she had watched a dear room-mate sicken and die with consumption. She was a lovely young Christian, whose quiet words had often controlled Julia's reckless moods. Julia never doubted her sincerity, or that her pure, peaceful life, and patience under prolonged suffering, was other than the result of an humble, clinging faith. She had not witnessed her death, but she shuddered as she remembered the pale waxen form, so wasted and cold in its white shroud. Where was she? Buried forever in that lonely, desolate,

foreign graveyard, or a happy glorified spirit, waiting, as she had promised, near the pearly gates for her coming? As Julia recalled her careless life since, Graham's words again stung her conscience, with the thought of what might be, if a sudden call should summon her hence. But closing the blinds, she went and sat down before her mirror, and the reflection of full flushed cheeks, and sparkling eyes, banished thoughts of death. When sickness came, she would prepare for the future. Now she was going to sip a little of the cream of life. When it grew bitter, would be time enough to do penance. Possibly she might become a sister of charity. Their dress was very becoming. But that was supposing she didn't marry; and then her mind became interested in deciding the state of feeling between Ada Hunt and her cousin. She was sure Ada loved him, and was only trifling with Graham. Was Hunt doing the same with her, only to amuse himself and arouse jealousy in Ada? She resolved to watch, and, if that was his plan, to meet him on his own ground. What a Nemesis she might prove to them both! Surely this was the mission of her visit—avenging the wrongs of the innocent and true. Having reached this conclusion, with a smile of self-complacency, she blew out her light, and in a few moments slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER IV.

A DAY OF REST.

T was later than usual, Saturday night, when Ned Malcome finished his week's work, and started for home. He lived on the mountain slope, a mile from the colliery. He chose this spot, because he had a blind mother and delicate sister to provide for, and the high land agreed with them better. But it made a long, lonely walk for him, now that there was so much lawlessness in those regions. He knew he had enemies, but he always carried loaded pistols, and as he was a brave, powerful fellow, he did not feel much anxiety.

But that day he had again received threatening letters, and now he walked rapidly, with a cautious step, and ear alert for every sound. As he was passing a clump of cedars, he heard a slight rustle, and saw a dark figure move slowly out, to meet him on the other side. Cocking his pistol, he held it ready for use, and demanded in a stern voice, "Who's there?"

"For God's sake! don't fire; it's me, Ned," exclaimed a trembling woman's voice. He dropped

his weapon, sprang forward, and clasped both the girl's outstretched hands, as he said in tones shaken with terror: "Bessie Walker! how come you so late in such a lonely spot? I might have shot you."

"To see you, Ned," said the girl, in a low, faltering voice.

"But why run the risk? I was coming to your house to-night. Are you sure it was not to meet somebody else?" and he looked around in keen suspicion. The girl drew herself up with offended dignity, as she replied: "If you think so poorly of me, it is indeed a pity I risked so much," and she attempted to withdraw her hands.

But Malcome held them with a firmer grasp, as in a tender tone he asked, "Was it to save me from trouble or danger?"

"Yes, Ned," she replied, looking up then with trusting fidelity in her large brown eyes; "it was to prevent your coming that I met you here. Father says we can't keep company any longer, and if you had seen him, he would have talked in such a way, that I feared you might get angry, and—Ned, there is trouble ahead."

"But, Bessie, why does he turn against me now? He knows I have a snug sum laid by in the bank, and that I will be able to take good care of a wife."

"It's all Uncle Sam's fault. He has great influence with father, and he's mad because you don't

join the Union. He says your holding out, and getting such wages, is making others dissatisfied. You must be made to give in."

"And to separate us is the surest way to bring it about," said Malcome, bitterly. "But he'll find that won't work, since you have shown the courage to meet me here, my bonnie Bessie, we can bid defiance to his plans."

"But, Ned, if you were a member of the Union, we could meet as usual, and bad men wouldn't have a handle against you. Bill McQuaid suspects you are his rival. I have been very careful not to fasten his suspicions on you, for there isn't anything he wouldn't do. I don't like it, that he is such friends with Uncle Sam now, and in our store so much of the time."

"O Bessie! I can't bear that you should even pass the time o' day with that bad man."

"Yes, I can't endure him. It is only for your sake I allow him to speak to me. Think what a dangerous enemy he would make; and your position gives him a good pretext to injure you."

"Bessie, your Uncle Sam and a few others want to push things to extremes here, stop the fires and let the mines fill. As long as I am not a member, they can't remove me, except by force, and the majority of the men would rather I remained, and they know it. Mr. Graham thinks that when Mr. John Gordon comes, he can persuade him to make

an arrangement to which the best of them will agree, and go to work. So I want to keep all ready."

"Oh! I wish he would come right away, and end this terrible suspense. You have no idea how some families are pinched, and running up bills at our store. Some are as much as four hundred dollars in debt."

"I shouldn't think your father would want the strike to continue, or favor it in any way."

"Oh! he must. Uncle Sam has great influence with the men, and he says he will make them pay father what they owe. Then, if he don't trust them now, it's precious little he'll get when they are at work. Many of the men are honest, and I am really sorry for them. There was a meeting last night, back of our store. There is some deviltry planning, for Bill McQuaid and Tom Lynch were the chief speakers. I think Uncle Sam was in there, too. They all came in the store and took a drink afterward. Bill seemed particularly joyous."

"O Bessie! if I could only take you right away from all these surroundings, to my peaceful mountain home, and the companionship of my dear old mother and Annie."

They had been walking toward the town, and as Bessie saw the bright lights, which they were nearing, she heaved a sigh of sorrowful longing, and said, in a faltering voice: "I fear, Ned, I'll

never get there. Oh! I can't tell you what I don't fear. Think what it would be for your mother and sister to have you brought home wounded or dead. I don't plead for myself, although I believe it would kill me; but for their sakes," and she clasped his arm with both hands, and looked up, her eyes brimming over with tears.

"O Bessie! don't urge me any longer. It is as much for my comrades' sake, as for Mr. Graham, I keep my position. I'll run no foolish risks, and you can help me, if you will set your woman's wits to work, to find out your uncle and McQuaid's plans, and let me know at once. If they persist in their effort to stop the pumps, and drive us away, I'll take steps to secure our safety."

"Why not now, instead of waiting till the mischief is done?"

"Because," said Malcome, in a low tone, as if he feared some one was close behind, "Mr. Graham don't wish to show any distrust. But he will bring troops here, if compelled by the necessity of protecting the colliery. It is only a few roughs who are planning this disturbance. If they attempt it here, as they have elsewhere, he'll enforce the law, and rogues will get their due."

Just then a man passed them, and threw up a dark-lantern, revealing them plainly; but by one gleam, before he closed it, they recognized him as Sam Walker. Bessie shuddered, and clung close

to Malcome. He ground his teeth, and for a moment doubled his fist, as if he would like to fell to the earth, the man who was moving on so rapidly in front of him. But instead, he turned down a side street, where Bessie could gain her home by a back entrance, unobserved. Holding her fast for a moment, he asked: "Dearie, will you be true to me, let come what will?"

"Can you doubt me, Malcome?"

"Surely I have no right, after to-night. But it may not be easy for us to meet often. Write to me, if you hear anything I ought to know. Good-night, now; God keep my darling!"

They exchanged a silent caress; then Ned watched till the door closed on her, when he turned, and walked slowly home.

Sunday morning, after a late and scanty breakfast, Dan Malcome told his wife that he was going up on the mountain for a while, to see his mother and Ned. He lit his pipe, and in a gruff voice bade his two boys go back, as they were following him. He did not feel in a good humor. That day's supplies were low; his wife was discouraged and complaining; his children's clothes were ragged and insufficient for the cold, and the prospect ahead looked very gloomy. The Sabbath stillness of the mountain, in its pure white mantle, did not soothe or divert his thoughts, as with sullen brow and downcast eyes, he climbed

the steep path that made a short cut to his brother's home.

When just about to open the door, he heard singing, and glancing in the window, he saw twenty or thirty children, standing in a group about Mr. Graham, and his brother and sister, who were leading them in a familiar hymn, while his old blind mother, seated in her rocking-chair, was leaning eagerly forward, with a happy smile on her face, and her thin, wrinkled fingers beating time on the arm of her chair. The room was tidy, and cheerful with sunlight and a bright fire. A glance took it all in, but with a muttered oath he strode rapidly farther up the mountain.

Reaching an old stump, he brushed away the snow, and sat down, panting for breath. Beneath him lay his home in the miners' village, and the black coal-breaker, with its buildings adjoining, then the ice-bound river, and great hills rising beyond. To the right was a fine view of the stately mansion on Cedar Ridge, while just below him a light column of smoke curled up from his brother's cottage, and faintly the sound of their voices came to his ear.

"Bah!" he said, taking the pipe from his mouth, and striking the ashes on the stump, "one would think Ned had enough o' that when we were lads. I can't remember the time I didn't dread Sunday, sitting in kirk for hours, on hard seats, and if I

stirred hand or foot, father put on a stern look that I knew meant whipping, or long verses out o' the Bible or catechism to learn by heart. I vowed if I once got clear, it was precious little I'd have to do with it, or my bairns either."

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, the children were dismissed, and he saw them going along the road in happy little groups. Then Mr. Graham and his brother came in sight, talking earnestly. Dan was afraid he would miss seeing Ned, so gave a peculiar whistle, which had been a signal between them since boyhood. Ned looked up and recognized him, and bidding his companion good-bye, began climbing to his position. When within speaking distance, he called, "Hallo, Dan! what are you doing here? Why didn't you come to the house?"

"Na, na; I had eneuch o' prayin' and singin' when a laddie. I wadna hae mair o' that," he replied, in the broad Scotch he sometimes used with his brother, and always when addressing his mother.

"It wadna hurt ye, or your ain bairns, either," replied Ned. Then seating himself beside Dan, he continued earnestly: "That's the trouble; you always swing off to the opposite extreme. Mayhap father was a little too strict and stern, but now you will have naught to do with religion, calling it all gloomy fanaticism, when I believe it a gospel of love and glad tidings."

“ Well, well, I wish you would teach that gospel to the owners of these mines, and they would give us our rights. Your religion may be very well, for the next world, if there is one. It isn’t much but talk here. When it comes to action, I find money is the God for them all, and the main question is, ‘ Does it pay ? ’ I tell you what, Ned,” said Dan, bringing his fist down hard on the old stump, “ Things are getting to a desperate pass with us ; many of our best and most trustworthy men are being driven to the wall. I don’t know what will be the end, if the operators hold out much longer.”

“ Is there any hope that they will yield ? ”

“ None that I can see, although Sam Walker thinks Gordon and Hunt will have to give in soon ; but things may go on till the men take redress in their own hands.”

“ Which means riot and bloodshed, ’ rousing the indignation of the country against them, and injuring their cause infinitely more than it can help. Laborers in the mass stand a poor chance against capital and corporations. What did we gain by our strike four years ago, but an immense amount of privation and suffering, then after a long suspense, entered the mines burdened down with debt at lower wages than when we struck. It seems to me that these unions injure more than they help. What right has any one to dictate to me whether I shall work or not, and what wages I shall get ? ”

"Why, Ned, that is just what these companies are doing, and we unite together to resist their tyranny."

"Yes, and they take it easy, and often are gainers thereby, and you and your families are driven to starvation. I wonder why there must always be this conflict between labor and capital ; one can't do without the other. If each would only practice the Christian rule, 'Do as you would be done by!'"

"Ay, but in business each looks out for Number one, and your devout superintendent is as eager for it as the rest."

"You are mistaken there ; his plan is, that the miner should have a certain per-centage on each ton of coal, and that should be regulated, as the employers, by the market price."

"That has been tried, and the miners liked it and were laying up money under it, but the operators were not willing to continue. They want to grind us down to be white slaves, and we'll starve rather than submit."

"Now, Dan, there is another side to that question. As I understand it, the miners' wages were not to go below a certain mark, no matter how the market stood, but when there was a rise they were to profit. If this is to be a fair co-operation, the miner must share the risks. There, you see, the men failed on my rule. But I believe and know

from experience, that if a man is honest and industrious, and does his work thoroughly, he will never fail a good paying position. As you know, it is the lazy and inefficient that are dropped first, when work is slack, and my objection to these unions is that they help to support that class, and prevent the really trustworthy men from earning an honest living."

"Well, I don't know but you're right. Yet we are in for it now, and I tremble for what's coming. There's a few men, like Bill McQuaid and others we know, who are ready for any mischief. I fear your position will not long be safe. Hadn't you better go away for a while?"

"No, Dan. I promised Mr. Graham to stick to my post, and I'll not be such a coward as to fly from the threats of such worthless scamps."

"Yes, but your life wouldn't be worth a pin, if they planned to take it."

"And yet you ask me, a Christian, to join a society that, however you may gloss it over, deals in murder."

"That's putting it pretty stiff. It's these roughs who are responsible for such acts."

"Sam Walker talks very plausibly. But if there is riot and bloodshed in these regions, on his shoulders the responsibility will rest. Were you at the meeting Friday night?"

"I did not know they had one."

"No. Such men as you and your comrades, who would fight this out honorably, were not wanted. I find it necessary to keep well posted, and mean to know still more. I think I shall remain at the colliery, nights. I don't want to expose mother and Annie. I shall look out for them as best I can and shall commission you to do the rest, and see to their comfort. Come to my room at the breaker, to-morrow, and I will lend you some money for present use."

"Thank you, Ned. You've been a true brother, and I don't know but you've taken the better course. There's one thing I'll do for you. I'll keep a sharp look out that you are not molested. I have considerable influence, and can make this place too hot for those men, if they disturb matters any more."

"Well, come down and take dinner; I see Annie looking for me."

They entered the cottage and found the table supplied with a simple, but abundant, and well-cooked dinner. The blind mother's chair was drawn up on the side nearest the fire, and Annie sat beside her. She was a slender girl, with skin of transparent fairness, and blue eyes, usually sad and drooping. As they came in she looked at her brother Dan with a mingled expression of anxiety and caution for her mother.

Passing close by her, Ned whispered, "There's

no cause for alarm," then said to his mother, "Here's Dan, come to see ye."

"Ah ! laddie, its long sin ye were here. I was some feared ye had forgot your auld mither."

"Na, na, dinna think that ; but I've had mair time nor heart for visitin'. I canna tell whin I've sit down to sae gran' a feast. We've had sair times, mither, an the oppressor is grindin' us hart."

A warning look from Ned and Annie checked him.

"What div ye mean, Dan?" asked his mother.

"Weel, it's the way o' the warl. The puir fowk hav' to pinch, that the rich may fare sumptuously."

"Dinna be discontent wi' ye lot, me bairn. We have muckle to be thankfu' for. God gies us all mair nor our desarts."

"Weel, weel, I am no sae sure o' that. I ken some wha' have a devilish hard life, an' they's na waur than their neebors, and I doubt na, money's far better."

"In this warl ye'll have tribulation. But, 'I've overcome the warl,' says the gude master. Think o' the sabbath rest beyon', o' the gran' marriage supper o' the Bride an' the Lamb, an' what it will be to sit doon there. It's but a wee whiles, the struggle and the waitin', thin the joy that remaineth."

And, forgetting her surroundings, the old wo-

man's thoughts seemed lifted entirely from earth. Shut up to physical darkness, and knowing naught of the turmoil of conflicting interests and passions surging around her, the peace of God which passes human knowledge had taken possession of her heart, and she was like one patiently waiting her term of exile, till she could join the loved ones gone to that heavenly home.

Her hearing now was much impaired, and only answered readily to her broad mother tongue. So Dan and his brother and sister talked softly together, and their voices did not disturb her thoughts.

Their father had been a small Highland farmer, and a strict Covenanter. The Earl on whose estate he lived, decided to include the farm in his pleasure park, so he gave them notice to leave. A brother was living in a town in Pennsylvania, and there they joined him. The children grew up and received strict home training and a public school education. About ten years previous, both father and uncle were suddenly killed by an explosion in a machine-shop. The boys then went into the mines, and about two years ago had entered the employ of Gordon and Hunt, and moved to their present habitations.

It was near sunset when Dan rose to leave. He had been in an atmosphere of peace and love that had recalled all the good influences of his boyhood.

As he stood in the open doorway, bidding them good-by, the hills all about him were bathed in a flood of golden light, till they seemed like the delectable mountains, of which he used to read in *Pilgrim's Progress*. The sun was yet poised in the western sky, while around it clouds ranged one above another in gold and crimson masses, like glittering phalanxes guarding his throne.

"Dan, can you look on that and still believe there is no God?" asked Ned; then, in a reverent voice, repeated, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even forever."

"Well, Ned, in my present mood I feel I can believe anything; but this light will pass in a moment, and those clouds shut down heavy, with biting wind and driving snow. So the doubts gather over me. You have quoted your promise, but that don't seem to stand. They say the mountains of Jerusalem, now waste and barren, are in possession of the Turks, and his people, scattered far and wide, seem but poorly cared for."


"Ah! but it's because of their unbelief. O Dan, don't fling aside the faith of your fathers. The clouds will lift, if we only bide His time."

"Weel, weel, I'll try, but the flesh and the deil is mair than a man can wi'stand, whin he hae them baith to fight."

"Ay, if he seek na stronger help."

CHAPTER V.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

ULIA EARLE entered upon her project for giving justice to Ada and Mr. Hunt with avidity. But she soon began to realize, that with the latter it was a losing game. Hunt could be very fascinating when he chose, and Julia found his society was beginning to have a charm for her she had not imagined possible. She found that the hours he was away dragged slowly by, and became animated, while her eyes sparkled and cheeks flushed, in his presence; but she grew pale and listless when the stimulus was withdrawn.

Ada noted these changes with a bitter smile, and thought, "She will be one more victim. He will marry her though to secure her money. Then she will find out what his love-making is worth. Really, I would warn her, were it not that she would put it down to jealousy. She penetrated my secret the first night she came, but wouldn't believe one word against him now. La Rochefoucauld says, 'It is more easy to be wise for others than for ourselves,' and I believe him. I have dis-

covered that Henry has some operation on hand now, that is taxing him to the utmost, something that will either result in brilliant success, or desperate failure. Money is close, I hear them say. I more than suspect Grace's property is being used, and that little sum of mine he holds. Where else he helps himself, I'm not sure. But he is a bold player and large interests are in his hands. There is nothing I can do now, but watch and wait. A stranger has been riding with him lately. I must get acquainted with him; perhaps then I can obtain a clue to what is in progress, and help or hinder as best subserves my interests. It behooves me to consider them well, for I have no one to do it for me. It will be a little variety, too; for Graham is becoming very tiresome, and I never can make Henry jealous of him."

So Ada watched and laid her plans, and time slipped by, and the projected sleigh-ride had not been taken. Frank Gordon had a cold and Grace would not leave him, but urged the others to go while the moon was at the full. They finally consented, if the evening following should prove clear.

It was rather late when Julia came down to breakfast that morning. All had left the table except Grace and Graham, who had been detained at his office; Ada was still in the room preparing some toast for her aunt. Julia's first exclamation was,

"Oh! Grace, won't you order the sleigh right away, and go with me to the town? We can select the pattern for that sofa cushion; I am so anxious to begin it."

"We won't be able to go this morning," replied Grace; "Mrs. Gordon wants to drive out, as it is such a fine day. You and Ada can go with her, but she wouldn't dare ride so far."

"Now, that's a shame. Whenever we've wanted to go out together, ever since I came, that selfish old woman has put in her claim, and everything had to yield. I want that worsted to-day. It is terribly stupid without some nice fancy work."

"I am sorry, Julia; but, you know, she is so delicate, that she can only go in pleasant weather."

"She is just full of whims and notions. She eats as heartily as I do. Her disposal of that prairie chicken last night didn't seem very delicate. Yet she was finding fault with you all the time about it, and if you would only manage your servants as she did—and all that. It made me so vexed to see you sit there, as meek as Moses, never asserting your rights."

"Julia, you forget she is Mr. Hunt's mother, and Frank's house is now her home."

"I don't care, I don't care a bit," said Julia, passionately; "it is a perfect imposition, and if I ever get married, I'll not have a host of my hus-

band's relations saddled on me, and dictating to me how to act."

"Miss Earle," said Ada, in a very gentle tone, "I will tell my aunt you are anxious to get that worsted, and I know she will give up her ride."

"No, you needn't. I don't want to go now," snapped Julia, and continued her breakfast, while Ada took up her plate of hot toast, and walked out of the room with an injured air. Graham looked indignantly at Julia, and thought she was as disagreeable a girl as he ever met; perfectly childish in her petulance. She caught his reproving glance, and although an angry flush passed over her face, she said nothing, till Grace, who was feeling very uncomfortable at the position of affairs, said, hoping to make all smooth, "Mr. Graham, perhaps you would have time to take Julia to town in the cutter?"

Before he could reply, Julia said sharply: "Indeed, Grace, I'll not go a step. I was hoping we might have a nice cosy ride together. If we can't have that, we will stay at home."

Maurice rose and bowed himself out, thankful to escape her further company. As he walked to his office, he thought of Burns's lines:

"Oh! wad some power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as others see us."

Then he imagined what she would be, when the

infirmities of age had deprived her of what little grace her youth gave ; and it seemed as if old Mrs. Gordon's complainings would be preferable to her selfish whims. He recalled Ada's thoughtful, gentle ministrations to her aunt, and did not imagine that she had any purpose of her own to compass, but put it all to the score of her kind, generous nature.

Grace said to her sister, as he left the room, "Really, Julia, it was too bad of you to speak in that manner before Mr. Graham and Ada. I think she believed you meant it as a fling at her."

"I am sorry if it troubles you. But, Grace, I believe that girl is an artful, designing creature, and she is using your hospitality only as a vantage ground to work out her own schemes."

"Oh! Julia, what reason have you to think so?"

"She wants to secure her cousin, Mr. Hunt, and that makes her so gracious to his mother. Now if I wanted him ever so much, I wouldn't cuddle to that old tyrant's whims."

"Pshaw! little sister, you are getting jealous, and that shows my plans about Mr. Hunt will be fulfilled. I shall expect to see you accept him, and the mother-in-law too."

"Never the mother-in-law. I will not be imposed on as you are, and always have been, since I can remember. I am willing to help the truly deserving, but I have sense enough to detect frauds."

"And you imply I have not. Come, Julia," said Grace, rising with unusual dignity, for her gentle temper was at last fully roused, "I think this conversation had better close. I am, perhaps, the best judge of my duties toward my husband's relations, and if I choose to bear with their peculiarities, I shall expect that you, as my sister, will not express your opinion as freely as you did before Mr. Graham this morning. If Mr. Hunt had heard you, he would be careful how he sought such an amiable wife."

"I am sure I don't want him. There is no use trying to open your eyes to what is going on around you. Time will show whether I'm mistaken, and I can't afford to quarrel with my only sister. So, my darling, I ask your forgiveness. I see I was naughty to unburden my mind so publicly. Henceforth I will endeavor to bridle my tongue; but, while I muse the fire burns and sometimes there must be an explosion, I suppose like the fire-damp. Those thoughts had been collecting ever since I came, and my disappointment about that ride this morning was just the spark to set me off. Now, I promise you, I will be as fresh and sweet as honey."

"Well," laughed Grace, "when you feel in danger of another such explosion, please reserve it for my ears only."

The evening proved as clear and beautiful as the

day, and directly after dinner the large sleigh was ordered, and they started ; Julia and Hunt on the back seat, and Graham and Ada their vis-à-vis. Julia never looked prettier than in her dark seal-skin jacket, and soft fur cap. The latter fitted her small shapely head so snugly, while the wind tossed her brown curls, which were not of artificial growth, in a most bewitching manner round her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

Even Graham could not help admiring her, and contrasting her with Ada, who looked pinched ere they had driven a mile ; while her nose, which was rather sharp and thin, received all the color. She knew that she did not appear to advantage on a sleigh-ride, and it made her ill-humored.

“Oh ! is there anything more delightful than a sleigh-ride on such a winter night ?” exclaimed Julia, as they skimmed rapidly over the snow, to the tune of the silver bells.

“Yes, a summer sail on yonder river. I don’t like winter,” said Ada.

“You should have been a sultana in some eastern harem,” said Hunt, lightly lifting one of her long black curls. “How magnificently you would look in their gorgeous dress.”

Ada drew her hair away with a gesture of annoyance, as she replied, “You are mistaken. I would never accept a divided position. I must be queen alone, if only in a cottage.”

Graham's eyes shone down upon her, as if he were hoping ere long to offer her that position. But with a mocking laugh, Hunt replied, "Very fine talk, but you are a born aristocrat. The cottage would have to be exceedingly commodious, with furnace, gas, and all the modern conveniences. Now this young lady," turning to Julia, "I fancy could manage to rough it, and have a good time as she went along."

"Yes," said Julia, "I prefer luxury and refinement; but I like to mix with all sorts of people. I've been contemplating a raid on the miners' dwellings. Life is so formal and commonplace in our circles. You see people without a mask among the poor."

"What a character you give us! What sort of a face have you beneath this, Miss Julia?" asked Hunt.

They all laughed, for a more tell-tale face than hers could scarcely be found.

"I know," she answered with a blush, yet joining the laugh, "You think I am not good at disguise, but I may have a thought or two hidden away down, that you don't suspect."

Ada and Hunt looked at her anxiously, but the latter said lightly, "It must indeed be very deep. But as you remarked, one does see amusing specimens while mingling in the vulgar crowd."

"That's the reason," continued Julia, "that I gen-

erally prefer not to ride in the palace cars, and Grace thinks it so strange. But I like to watch people come and go. I don't know whether I ever told you of such a funny character I once met coming from Niagara. It was just before I went abroad, but she made such an impression on my memory that I never forgot her. It was a young woman in deep widow's weeds, who sat in front of me, and a comfortable old country-woman was next to the window. Soon the widow began telling her companion her sorrows, in such a loud voice that all around had the benefit.

"She said, 'she went to Californy with her husband for his health, though he was such a sickly creetur there really wan't no use. But they tried it, an' after buyin' a place, an' spendin' a heap of money, he just died; and she had to clean all out, an' come way home with his remains; as he was sot on bein' buried in the old graveyard.'" This had cost her such a deal of trouble and money, and seemed to be the main burden of her grievances; but she talked it over very cheerfully, although the good soul beside her was full of sympathy, and interlarded her story with exclamations of "La now, what a pity, an' you a lone woman." When the train reached its first station, the widow went out, and I thought she had reached her journey's end; but she came back again, and remarked that 'she had been to look after her husband's

remains;’ then sat down, and unrolled a slice of beef-steak from a newspaper and offered her companion a piece. So I found at every station she went to look after the ‘remains’ and came back with some new refreshment. It really did my heart good, she was such a cheerful, yet devoted mourner.”

“Pshaw! It’s disgusting!” said Ada.

“No, it wasn’t. That was her way, and she looked much nicer than if she had been crying and complaining all the time.”

“And I don’t doubt,” said Graham, “that she was kind and thoughtful for her sick husband while he lived. It was her energy and cheerfulness that gave her courage to go so far for his sake, and bring back his body to be laid among his friends.”

“You will make her out a model between you,” said Ada.

“Well,” replied Julia, “I have as often seen real courtesy and kind feeling among laboring men and women as in the higher walks of life.”

“Your experience having been so great!” said Hunt. “I don’t know, Graham, but we will have to become clowns, if we would gain that young lady’s favor.”

“A man may be that, as easily in broadcloth as in corduroy,” said Julia sharply, for his manner nettled her. Then quickly changing the subject, she exclaimed, “What a grand old forest!”

They had left the town, and ascending a high hill had reached its summit, and were then passing through a forest, expecting to descend and return by another circuit. There was something weird in the effect of the bare trees, which the moonlight repeated on the snow, while here and there tall fire-scathed pines loomed like dark specters above the rest.

As Julia watched them, she said, "Do any of you remember that little poem on Winter, by Bayard Taylor?"

"I don't think I ever saw it. How does it go?" asked Hunt.

"The valley stream is frozen,
The hills are cold and bare,
And the wild white bees of winter
Swarm in the darkened air."

"I look on the naked forest—
Was it ever green in June?
Did it burn with gold and crimson,
In the dim autumnal noon?"

"Ah! yes! for a thousand Aprils,
The frozen germs shall grow,
And the dews of a thousand summers,
Wait hidden beneath the snow."

"I recall it now," said Graham, "but you have left out a number of verses."

"I know—." Just then her words were inter-

rupted by the rapid discharge of firearms, just before them.

"My God! what's that?" exclaimed Hunt, as both gentlemen sprang to their feet.

They could see nothing, but the smell of powder was strong on the air. For a few moments, the coachman had all he could do to control his horses, and make them stand. Ada at first gave a scream, which Hunt partly smothered. Then she crouched down in the bottom of the sleigh, one arm thrown around her cousin, the other hand grasping Graham's.

"What is it?" asked Julia, under her breath. Hunt and Graham listened, drew out their pistols, and cocked them for use.

"Oh! let us turn back, and go home as quickly as possible," cried Ada.

"We can't turn here," said Hunt, "and there are miles of forest behind us, and but one in front. We must go on; I don't believe there is any danger for us. It is probably some poor 'black leg,' receiving his punishment for disobeying the Union."

"What do you mean?" asked Julia.

"Why, some miner, who has ventured to work contrary to their orders; and they are teaching him a lesson."

"Horrible! What safety is there for any?" cried Julia. "We had better go on, the sooner we are out of the woods the better."

"I have a six-shooter here," said Graham. Then leaning down he whispered to Ada, "Take courage; I will defend you."

But she only moaned, and clung faster to her cousin. They took off the bells, lest their sound should betray them; then moved swiftly over the soft snow. Julia sat erect, striving to pierce through the dark shadows with her large startled eyes. Her cheeks were pale, mouth compressed, and hands clenched, as if every nerve was strung to its utmost. But she was resolved to meet the danger, and know the worst.

When they had gone but a few rods, she gave a low exclamation of horror, for right beside her on the road, lay a wounded, bleeding man. Graham looked, and cried, "Why it's poor Malone, the man that I made one of our firemen last week."

"Is he alive?" asked Hunt, as Graham sprang out to examine his wounds.

"Yes, we must take him home; it is just below here."

"No, no," cried Ada, "don't, for God's sake, bring that man in here; they'll come again and kill us too."

"We can't leave him to bleed to death, or perish with cold," said Graham.

"I'll not have him in here," cried Ada passionately. "Henry, have pity I beseech you, and order John to drive on. We can send help."

"Yes, Graham, it would be very disagreeable for the ladies. If his home is so near, we can soon get word there, and they can come to his assistance," said Hunt.

"There are none to come. I'll stay with him, and do the best I can; but I fear he will perish meanwhile."

"Oh! why will you wait here, when those ruffians may return, and shoot us at any moment. If they will kill each other, let them; but why should we sacrifice our lives?" said Ada.

"Well, go on, John," said Graham.

"What, leave you alone with that wounded man! No, Mr. Graham; I will ride on the box with John. Ada can have my seat, and you can support him beside you," said Julia.

"Oh! if you put him in here I shall faint," cried Ada.

"That will be your best plan to get over the time," said Julia tartly. "No doubt Mr. Hunt will support you gracefully."

Then she sprang out beside Graham, and offered her wraps to bind up the wounds. Graham thought that the man would live if he had immediate care; but he was unconscious from loss of blood. With John's help he lifted him on the seat; for Ada occupied all her cousin's attention. Then Julia mounted the box, and they rode rapidly down the hill.

CHAPTER VI.

A RUDE AWAKENING.



WHEN they reached a wretched-looking house that was more hut than cottage, Graham said that that was where Malone lived. As the coachman drew up in front of it, he asked Hunt if he would go in and prepare the wife to receive her wounded husband. But Ada almost screamed, that "she wouldn't let Henry leave her, to be murdered by any ruffians, who might come along."

Hunt had no desire to undertake the disagreeable task, and pleaded the necessity of guarding the ladies, proposing that John should go in first. But Julia sprang down, saying, "I will tell her," and not waiting for them to answer her knock, she opened the door and stepped in. Then her heart misgave her, when she saw the poverty and suffering already before her. In one corner of a small, close room, a woman lay on a bed, gazing at her with wild terror-stricken eyes, out of deep sunken sockets, and with face and form emaciated as she had not thought a human being could be and live.

Beside her, asleep in an old rocking-chair was a pale young girl, about twelve years old, and upon a straw mattress on the floor was a young boy with his broken leg bound in splints.

How could she tell them that outside was the father and husband, wounded possibly unto death? But her face must have revealed bad news, for the woman started up, and in a hollow whisper asked, "Have they killed him?"

"No; oh no; he is alive, and not seriously hurt, I hope. We came on just as it happened, and brought him home. Don't be so terrified. I assure you Mr. Graham will do all he can for him, and we'll have a doctor here at once."

But the woman fell back, covered her face and moaned; while the young girl awoke, started to her feet, then staggered against the wall, as Graham and the coachman entered, bearing the unconscious blood-stained form of her father.

There was no spot to lay him, but on the bed beside his wife. She leaned over him with a wail of anguish that pierced even to his dull ear. He opened his eyes a moment, gave a groan of pain, then the darkness closed round him again. As Julia stood there she realized for the first time what poverty and suffering, wasting sickness and sudden death really meant; for in that short half-hour she had been brought face to face with them all. But now was the time for action, and she

came bravely forward, rendering Graham the assistance there was no one else to give.

Mrs. Malone was so exhausted with fright and grief, that she could only lie gasping for breath, while her hands convulsively clasped her husband's. Mary, her young daughter, had not recovered sufficient presence of mind to be of service ; while the boy lay helpless, muttering fierce oaths between his teeth. He knew too well why that bloody deed was done.

"Mr. Graham," whispered Julia, "do you suppose the men who committed this act knew how this family were situated?"

"I cannot tell ; possibly not."

"It seems to me that the fiends themselves could hardly have done such a deed."

"It's their code of justice. I doubt if they thought beyond that. Alas ! for 'man's inhumanity to man.' Miss Julia would you go a little out of your way, and leave word for Dr. Smith ? I'll write him what I want on a card, as I shall stay here to-night."

"Is it safe for you to remain ?"

"Oh yes. I must. You see, I feel responsible, for I urged this man to go to work, when he was afraid the Union might take vengeance if he did. Now I must see him safely through."

"Surely you are not responsible for this ?"

"No, only indirectly. But you had better go

now ; Miss Ada is becoming impatient," he added, with a contemptuous curl of the lip, as he heard Hunt calling them.

"Let her wait," said Julia, with a shrug. "Just write down what you would like to have from the house immediately, and I will see that John brings it. Is there no way to arrest these would-be murderers?"

"I'll do my best to give them justice." Then handing her another card, Maurice said, "If you can execute those commissions you will do a generous deed, Miss Julia, and you have shown that you have both the heart and courage to perform."

Julia took the cards, gave one more glance around, and passed out into the pure air and silent night. Hunt sprang from the sleigh to help her to a seat, but she quickly mounted the box beside John, saying, "I prefer this, I can see what's before me ; and I have some directions to give John. We must stop at Dr. Smith's."

"Oh ! that's half a mile out of our way. I am most frozen. John can go there after he takes us home," said Ada.

"Which would make three miles further. We will go there first, if it is ten miles beyond. Down this way, John," said Julia, with an angry flash in her eyes.

Ada muttered, "I hope we will get home alive," then relapsed into dead silence.

Hunt tried remonstrance with Julia for occupying that high seat, and strove to keep up some conversation, but she was not inclined to talk ; and they returned home, a very different party from the merry one that started a few hours before.

When they entered the house, Ada immediately retired to her room, and took a strong narcotic to make her sleep. Julia told her sister what had happened, and together they prepared the supplies for the sick and wounded, and dispatched John with them to Graham. Then Julia's strength gave way. Her sister undressed her as if she were a baby, and watched beside her. Sometimes she lost consciousness for a little, yet her dreams were even worse than her waking thoughts. But Grace soothed her with gentle words, when she started up in terror, imagining the ruffians were attacking them ; and at last she fell into a sound sleep.

Dr. Smith responded promptly to Graham's summons. " Ah ! " he said, as he saw the wounded man, " life never was very dear among these miners ; but it has gone down fast the last few weeks, and don't cost anything now."

" I'll make his cost something," said Maurice.

" No, you won't. You will only offer a bribe for yours."

" Shure, doctor, he'll not die ? " cried Mrs. Malone, grasping his arm.

" I hope not, woman. I'll do my best for him.

But you must keep very quiet. Is there no other place we can lay him, to dress the wounds ? ”

“ There’s a little room next this. Miss Earle promised to send John back with a portable cot,” said Graham.

Just then John made his appearance with the article in question. Graham went to help him bring in the other supplies ; and his respect for Julia rose considerably as he noted her judicious selection of things, that it had not entered his masculine brain might be needed, but which he now found of vital importance.

After the probing and dressing of the wounds, Malone recovered partial consciousness, and began struggling as if to get away. Dr. Smith laid a detaining hand on him, and said,

“ Be quiet, John. You are safe now.”

“ Faith, docther, is it you ? What’s happened me ? ”

“ You had fallen among thieves, but Graham like the good Samaritan, passed by and brought you home.”

“ Whisth, yer honor, spake low. Will I iver do anither day’s work ? ”

“ Years’ more, I hope. But don’t worry about that now, Malone.”

“ I will see that you and your family are cared for, till you are able to be out again,” said Graham.

"God bless ye, sir. It's of me poor darlints in there I'm thinkin'. Ye mind the day I begun to work for ye, sir? Bill McQuaid was for shtoppin' me thin; but the rist bid me go on. Now they've taken a dirty advantage."

"Was it McQuaid who shot you?"

"Bedad! how could I tell? I was jist walking from town quaiet and aisy, when there were a flash, an' I knowed no more till I'm after coming to now."

"There, Malone, no more talking, or you will finish the job," said Dr. Smith, then added, in an aside to Graham: "You'll find out nothing. There are no witnesses to be had in these cases. I fear the results of this alarm more for Mrs. Malone, but her life now is only a question of weeks, at the best."

He then visited his patients in the larger room, and after administering a soothing potion, promised to come in the morning, and bade them good-night.

After a time blessed sleep came to all save Graham, who through the long hours remained a faithful watcher. He had leisure then, to think and fully realize what a change the events of that ride brought to him.

He recalled his happiness when he took a seat by Ada Hunt's side, as they started. His implicit faith that her beautiful face was but the index of

her character. Indeed, he believed he knew that character thoroughly ; and that while reserved to others, she had admitted him within the sacred penetralia, where her purest thoughts and noblest impulses dwelt. But those few moments of fear and danger had torn off her mask, and revealed a vain, heartless woman, who had given what little love she could spare from herself, to her cousin Henry.

It was a new and bitter lesson that came to Graham that night. He felt like one who had long been striving to obtain a priceless jewel. Then, when he seemed about to grasp it, the diamond point of truth had tested its value, revealing only brittle, worthless glass. Now he cared not who else might be caught by its glitter.

With painful minuteness he recalled every event of the evening. He had been surprised and gratified by Julia's conduct, so different from what he expected. Yet he believed that it was only the impulse of the moment, and that to-morrow another freak might lead her into action, as selfish and inconsiderate, as this evening she had proved thoughtful and generous. He had often been tempted to join in Ada's contemptuous laughs at the amount of energy she threw into trivial matters. It never occurred to him that he might help to strengthen her good impulses, and bring before her worthy objects. But that night his heart was

so sore, that he was inclined to give up all work for others.

What had he accomplished by trying to help the miners? There was one victim of his philanthropy lying wounded before him. And he knew, as well as Dr. Smith, that he could do nothing to bring the punishment where it was deserved; yet this act would help to embolden others, and might be but the beginning of turmoil and rioting.

Poor Graham had reached an experience, that, at times, comes to all earnest, hopeful workers—bitter disappointment in those most trusted, and an overwhelming sense of the triumphant power of wrong, till one is ready to cry out, “*Cui bono?*” to all urgings of further effort.

Then, if he be a true Christian, clear-eyed Faith comes to his side, and lays God’s Book of Providence open before him, slowly turning back the pages, even to the first promise given in Eden, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. Patiently she shows, how through the long ages those plans were working to their fulfillment, even when it seemed that the old Dragon was tightening his foul coils around the earth, and drawing all down to perdition. But in the fullness of time the Redeemer came; and not one jot or tittle of the past promises had failed. So faith, pointing to them, declares, “In their fulfillment is the surety of the future.”

The leaves of that book, however, turn slowly, and sometimes no one lifetime can catch the meaning of the involved sentences. They are also closely written, and reading carefully one comes to see how the seemingly trivial acts of good and ill recorded there, have solemn weight in the working out of God's mighty plot. So he learns to take God's measures of great and little, and resumes his work, trusting results to Him.

Graham went forth from that night's watch "a sadder, but a wiser man."

It was just daylight when he put on his overcoat, and woke Mary Malone, bidding her watch by her father till he came back. Then he stepped out on the crisp snow, and inhaled long breaths of fresh morning air, while he scanned with apprehensive glance the colliery, and miners' village near. Seeing that all was safe and quiet, he turned, and strode rapidly up a steep path, till he reached the porch of Ned Malcome's cottage.

Annie Malcome quickly answered his gentle knock. When she first saw him, a flush passed over her face, which he thought a reflection from the morning light behind him. But it paled instantly, as in a trembling voice she exclaimed, "Oh! Mr. Graham, what has happened to Ned?"

"Nothing, Miss Annie, forgive me for alarming you by coming here so early. I suppose he stayed at the colliery last night. I was riding with some

friends, when we discovered John Malone wounded by the side of the road, about a mile from here. We brought him home, and I have been with him all night. If he can have quiet and good care he will get well. Do you know where I can find a competent nurse, who will keep noisy intruders out?"

"Step in, sir, and I'll tell you of one who may suit. Was it because he had gone to work?"

"Yes, I fear that was his crime."

"Oh! Mr. Graham, how could they be so cruel, when there was so much trouble already? Can't you do anything to end this terrible strike?"

"What can I do; Miss Annie?" said Maurice, sadly. "I am but an agent. Gordon and Hunt will not sacrifice their interests for the men. I find that both parties are resolved to resist to the utmost, and you know who will be the chief sufferers."

"Ah! yes, I know. Ned has promised you he'll not leave that breaker, no matter how they threaten. The Scotch bide by their word, e'en to the grip o' death. Oh! dinna urge him ony mair. Think what it would be for the puir, blind mither, should he be brought hame, like John Malone," and Annie looked up, her eyes full of tears, as she spoke earnestly in her native tongue.

Graham took her clasped hands in his own a moment, as he replied, "Unless I can be sure of his safety, I'll not hold him to his promise. It is

for the men, as well as my employers, I want to keep the fires and pumps going. But I fear they are blind to their own interests."

Then he leaned his head wearily against the mantle-piece, and heaved a deep sigh. Annie looked up in quick sympathy, and said, "Sit down on that couch, Mr. Graham. You have been watching all night and need rest. I'll have some breakfast ready in a few minutes."

"Oh! no, don't trouble yourself, just tell me where I can find that nurse."

"There is an Irish woman, named Bridget Maguire, who lives in a wee cottage, a bit above us. She once took care of mother and me, when I was ill. She is coarse in looks and manner, but a kinder creature you could not find. I think she will go, if I ask her. If you will bide for the breakfast, sir, I'll put on my bonnet and show you where she lives."

"Thank you, Miss Annie. I cannot resist such an inducement. Give me that pail; I'll take Ned's place, and draw the water."

Annie stood watching him lower the bucket, and whispered to herself, "He's not so big and strong as Ned, but he's bonnier. He calls me 'Miss Annie,' jist as if I were some gran' leddy, and he is so good to all." Then with a happy heart and nimble fingers she prepared a dainty meal, and as the sun was shooting up long, golden arrows above

the opposite mountains, she came to the couch where Graham had thrown himself down to rest, and said, with the accent he liked to hear in her soft voice :

“Will ye gang to the ither room, sir? I’m sair troubled to wake ye so soon.”

“Oh! I am ready for anything now, and your coffee is so fragrant that I could go much further to secure it.”

During the meal they discussed the welfare of the little Sunday-school. Annie knew every child, far and near. They all loved her, and she had more influence than perhaps any other person in that region. She was very delicate in appearance, and one would hardly call her pretty; but there was a quiet dignity and refinement in her manner that won respect, while her gentleness disarmed pride.

As soon as Annie had attended to her mother’s comfort after breakfast they started, following an obscure path further up the mountain. After a long steep climb, Annie pointed to a little wreath of smoke rising above a clump of pines, that were covered and interlaced by what appeared to be an impenetrable thicket of American Ivy and wild grape vines.

“Surely, there isn’t a house in there?” said Graham. “Yes,” replied Annie. “It is lovely here in summer, and nicely protected in winter. Please follow this path.”

After a few steps, they emerged in front of a little hut. There was one window, and through it shone a blaze of pine knots, but so close was the thicket that its light could not be seen a rod away. Annie knocked at the door, and the fierce growl of an old bull-dog answered her summons. Graham stepped forward, saying, "Let me go first." But Annie motioned him back, as she replied, "The dog knows me, and Bridget won't let him harm us."

Just then a woman's face appeared at the window framed in an old black hood, beneath which was a broad white ruffled cap. Seeing Annie, there followed a short scuffle with the dog, and a loud voice bade him "sthop his noise, and know leddies from thaves."

Then a bolt slipped back, and a perfect giantess, with long bare arms akimbo, stood facing them.

At first Graham drew back, for so comical was her costume that he could not control his face sufficiently to meet her. She wore a pair of trousers inserted in large leather boots, over which hung a bright petticoat and short gown, the whole surmounted by a round good-natured face, hooded and capped as aforesaid.

In a hoarse, but strong voice, she asked, "Faith! Miss Annie, is the ould leddy sick that ye cum so airly?"

"No, Biddy, but I've brought Mr. Graham here.

He wants your help for some others in trouble. I knew he wouldn't have to ask in vain."

"Och! begorrah! ye don't mane ye've a gintlemon wid ye, and me all in this foine ploight?"

Then as Graham stepped forward, and was introduced, she said, "Shure, I hope yer honor will excuse me dress. But as there's no mon round, I find this more convanient like."

"Really, it is I who should make an apology for calling so early," said Graham laughing.

"O! niver you moind that, but coom in, Misther Graham. It's deloighted I am to see yer honor. An' how are ye, Miss Annie, darlin'? An' its prettier ye git every day ov yer life."

"Git doon, Towser, ye divil. Don't ye know a gintlemon yet?" said Bridget to the dog, as he was springing on Graham. But he recognized a kind firm glance, and instantly came up close to Maurice's side, wagging his stump of a tail. "There, sir, I know'd it; that dog kin tell a raal gintlemon, the minute he claps eyes on him," said Biddy in a triumphant voice.

Graham patted his homely head and replied, "He certainly is a wise dog, and must be a faithful protector."

"Faith! an' I'm pretty well able to look out for meself. But he's gude company, sir."

Graham then told the object which brought him there. Bridget's indignation was fully aroused.

“Och ! the dirty spalpeens,” she exclaimed ; “ I know ’em, sir. It’s the ‘ Molly Maguire ’ that do sich mane, bluidy thricks. Yer honor, that same name the Maguire, was as dacent an’ honest a name as yer own, till these blackguards used it for their divilish thricks. And if there’s ony thing now would persuade me to give up my freedom, an’ bear the yoke o’ matrimony, it would be that I moight be quit o’ the same.”

Graham and Annie laughed, and thought it was a very even choice, whether to meet the veritable Molly Maguires, or venture to be yoked with that amazon of the woods.

The outside of the hut was rough in the extreme. Within, the plaster of the walls was covered with paper made up of marine views in square pictures, each representing a ship tossing on an angry océan, in every position except keel uppermost. So continually did these pictures meet his eyes, that he began to feel almost sea-sick and grasped the rounds of his chair to be sure that was not tossing also. It was a relief to turn his eyes to the open fire-place, where pine knots made a bright blaze. But there even, on the wooden shelf about it, shells, sea-weed, and star-fish, were grouped in picturesque confusion, while outside the wintry forest and high mountains closed around, and shut in the little cabin.

"You seem fond of the sea," said Graham, going up to examine the shells.

"Oh! yer honor, them were Barney's, me sailor brother. Bad luck was it whin he quit the sea, an' took to diggin' under-ground. He was blowed up, poor sowl, an' I'm jist kaping them as a momentum of him, sir."

"Well, Bridget, Mr. Graham is in a hurry," said Annie, as Maurice turned rather abruptly away. "Can't you tell him now whether you will take charge of poor Malone?"


"Shure an' it an't asy for me to lave, but as it is yerself as is askin', I'll have to go. I've two chickens and me dog as must go wid me. But they'll do good service; one kin lay an egg now and then, and Towser will fight the very divil if I only give him lave. I'll cum doon, Misther Graham, as soon as I set me house in order. Ye may thrust me to kape all quoiet."

Graham thanked her, and said he would soon see her at Malone's. Annie told him that she would remain and help Biddie, then install her in her office as nurse. So with a hearty shake of the hand, he bade them good-bye, and was soon rapidly springing down the mountain path. Annie went to a rock where she could watch his descent, and stood there until Bridget joined her, and said, "Why didn't yees go back wid yer swatchheart, me darlin'? I could git the chickens wid Towser's help. The

only throuble is he will ketch 'em by the tail, an' poor old Domineck has only two feathers left. Since yer here, though, if yees will kape open that door, we can drive 'em in."

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW CONSPIRATOR.

T was a late hour before Graham joined the family at Cedar Ridge. Grace and Julia met him with eager questions after the welfare of the wounded man. He saw they were full of sympathy, and that he had only to mention a want, and Grace would see that it was supplied.

Ada noticed that Graham's eyes did not seek hers as usual, when he first entered the room ; she attributed it to jealousy, because she had shown a preference for her cousin Henry's protection on the ride, but thought that if they all went to Mrs. Butler's party that evening, she would probably be thrown upon his care, and could then explain matters away.

When they were gathered round the table, Frank Gordon said, " Well, Graham, have you succeeded in arresting those highwaymen, who according to the girls' story, nearly murdered you all last night ? "

" No, sir ; we were too late to act as witnesses, and there are no others to be obtained ; but it is going

to make us trouble, independently of the suffering to poor Malone."

"How so? Do you think they will disturb the operators?"

"No fear," said Hunt. "They will not dare to molest us. They know too well they would fare the worst in that battle. If they won't work, and are fools enough to bear the consequences, I don't know that we can interfere. We can stand it longer than they."

"That's the trouble," said Graham. "You are both antagonistic, when you should be friends. As well might the hands be at war with the brain. One cannot do without the other."

"But it's the hands who rebel. You wouldn't have us truckle and sue to these murderers and cut-throats?"

"No, but they are not all that. I don't justify this strike, or the outrages that have been perpetrated, or that are still to come, I fear. But there is no doubt that many of the operators have underpaid the laborer in the past, and they have not consulted their comfort and safety in the mines as they should have done. It was not till 1870, that a law was made in this State, compelling companies to have two shafts, or modes of exit in case of accidents. Yet to my certain knowledge, there are mines that would be working now, if possible, hundreds of feet below the surface, where, if their

engine house burnt up, and the mine took fire in consequence, there would be no escape. That such a calamity did happen at Avondale, is proof that it may again. • I believe, that if each party would only practice the good old maxim, ‘Live and let live,’ there would be no strikes, or trade unions.”

“I tell you, Graham, these miners are as unreasonable as children. There is no satisfying them. Didn’t we offer them the choice of ten per cent. reduction, when it was really to our interests to close the mines, as the market stood? I don’t justify those cases you speak of, yet I believe them the exception. But laborers, as a class, have just sense enough to see when their employers are in a tight place, and losing money. Then they get up their confounded strikes. It’s so with all trades, ‘the butcher, and baker, and candlestick maker,’ and that’s why the times are so dull. Who’s going to put capital into an investment that don’t pay? A man takes a contract and can’t fulfill it, because some of these infernal trades choose to go on a strike. There are millions of dollars in the country lying idle now, stowed away in odd corners, buried in the vaults of banks, because capitalists cannot use it with safety. How can we be other than indignant with the brutish stupidity of these men, in whom there’s neither sense nor reason?”

“That is true to a certain extent. But I think you have forgotten another great cause of these

hard times. It is the universal feeling of distrust that hampers business ; the want of strict honesty between man and man. Such gigantic frauds are being sprung upon us every day, that we don't know where we are safe. And then with the day laborer it is too often the case that 'there's little to earn and many to keep.' How can they be otherwise than ignorant and debased, if with hard labor they can but just keep from starvation ? ”

“ It is their want of thrift, and money wasted on bad whisky, which keeps them down,” said old Mrs. Gordon. “ Most of them live like their pigs, and won't send their children to school, while we pay their taxes.”

“ I allow that, although your assertion is too sweeping. But is there no reckless extravagance in the higher walks of life ? Human nature is much the same in the palace and cot. We certainly cannot expect a higher standard of morality and self-restraint among the ignorant and undisciplined than we practice ourselves ? ”

“ Really, Mr. Graham, we will begin to think you are a secret member of their association. Even Sam Walker couldn't argue their cause better,” said Ada.

“ No, I am no advocate for unions, if they combine to prevent industry, and give support to the lazy and inefficient. I believe, if a man or woman

does first-class work, they will be paid, for it commands good wages."

"You are right there," said Hunt ; " people come to me constantly for employment, and I ask them what they will do ? Oh ! anything. But when it comes to the question of what they know how to do, there's not the first thing of which they are truly capable."

" I know. I have a realizing sense of it. I couldn't even make a cup of tea, or cut out a night-cap so you would know which part went front, or which behind," said Julia.

" Yes ; but, Julia, you have had a fine education," said Grace.

" Well, I've studied a little of everything under the sun. If the amount of knowledge I have carried in books in my hands, were in my brains, I'd be a learned young lady ; but there's not one thing I know well enough to gain a living by, if necessity compelled me. I couldn't even teach the three R's. Every one says that my letters are like goose-tracks sprawling over the pages ; and I always had to strike or suspend, whichever they call it, before I finished fractions. I know it is mostly my own fault, but we were so hurried that it was necessary to get through so much, no matter how."

" You know enough to be very charming. You'll never have occasion for anything more severe," said Hunt.

"I am not so sure. The see-saw game life plays with us all in this country, makes it very uncertain who'll be up or who down. Now, if I were the daughter of an English Earl, I might safely feel that I should be rocked on the lap of idleness all my days."

"Well, little sister," said Grace, "you may always be sure of shelter and a crust with me."

"But, Graham, we have wandered from the subject," said Gordon; "you said the attack upon Malone would give us trouble. What did you mean?"

"I fear it will intimidate the firemen and engineer."

"If you find these men won't stay, go to town and get others, double their wages if necessary."

"If they won't let these work, they will find means to drive off the others."

"Then I'll send to Philadelphia. I'll not be coerced by a mob," said Hunt.

"Yes," replied Gordon, "I have received a letter from Uncle John; he says he'll send us men to go to work again, from there, if we wish; but would not have us submit to mob law if it takes all the troops in the State to protect us."

"Will he be here soon?" asked Graham.

"Not unless we send for him; he does not like winter journeys," said Gordon.

"No, no," said Hunt, "we don't need to trouble

the old gentleman. There's nothing to be gained by pressing matters, now. We will keep the pumps going. You offer the men any wages that will hold them, and we will defer sending for Uncle John till all else is exhausted. Don't you think so, Gordon?"

Frank readily assented; for at present he did not care to have his uncle, with his old-fashioned notions, investigating their affairs.

"If you business men have settled your matters, I will be thankful for a little attention," said Julia, demurely.

"Dear Miss Earle, I am all devotion," replied Hunt; "wherein can I help you?"

"A little instruction as to my social duties this evening, if you please. You know I am in foreign parts and not yet posted on their laws and customs. What time does the ball open to-night?"

"My dear, it is a sociable, and we ought to be there by nine o'clock," said Grace.

"Oh! this seems such a barbarous country, one don't know what to expect. Will you have an armed escort to protect us by the way, Frank?"

"I am at your service, Miss Julia," said Hunt; "I'll protect you with my life. Can you ask more?"

"I don't doubt you would be a gallant knight, but others might claim you, and I would be left in the lurch," replied Julia, with a malicious fling at Ada's monopoly the night previous. Hunt

blushed, and a deeper blush dyed Ada's cheeks, as Julia continued: "Mr. Graham, I think I can trust myself best to your care, and your six-shooter. Are you willing to assume the burden?"

"With pleasure, Miss Earle. I think I can get you there safely."

"Now, Miss Julia," said Hunt. "I didn't think you would be so resentful. Ada hasn't your pluck, and was frightened out of her wits. I had to humor her."

"I own, I have no fancy for being murdered on the highway. But I'll not trouble you to-night, for I am not going," said Ada coldly.

"Oh, yes, you must. Mrs. Butler is depending on you for the singing," said Grace; "Julia and Mr. Hunt were only joking."

"Mrs. Butler will have to excuse me," said Ada, as she swept out of the room, when they rose from the table.

Grace and Hunt felt annoyed; but the latter went to the library, and brought out a box, saying, "Miss Julia, I heard you wish for some scarlet carnations, for your hair to-night. Thomas could not press his forward in time, so I sent to Philadelphia, and they have just arrived. You see, I return good for evil."

"Oh, thanks. You are heaping coals of fire on my head. I'll wear them all night as a token of repentance."

Half an hour later Hunt knocked at his cousin Ada's door. When she opened it, he said :

"Could I trouble you to come down to the library ? I want a private audience. I'll not detain you long."

"Certainly, in a moment."

"You will find me waiting."

Ada closed her door again, and stood irresolute, while her eyes glowed, and she covered her flushed face with her hands, and murmured, "Can it be that my hopes are to be realized at last ? and yet, I never can be sure of Henry. I'll not let him see what a love-sick fool I am. If he is going to ask my aid, to work out some of his wily schemes, as he often has in the past, he'll find me ready. But he is seeking a dangerous ally. Oh, if he would only be content to let us both live a life of real love ; with no shams, or strivings after what we haven't got, and can't get honestly, I could be a true, good woman. I am called a flirt and heartless trifler ; but have I never been trifled with ? Hasn't Hunt for years known and used my love, for his own ambition, and I have been weak enough to let him ? Haven't scores of other men amused themselves with my beauty and talents, when they would have scorned the idea of marrying such a poor girl, dependent on her rich relations for a home. Is it more than justice that I revenge my injuries when the chance offers ? So

now, foolish heart, be calm, and keep everything under control."

When Ada joined Hunt, he carefully closed the door, and placed her a chair beneath the chandelier; then standing in front of her, said slowly, "I have a favor to ask of you. Will you grant it?"

"That depends. Let me hear it."

"Ada," he continued, speaking hesitatingly, "I want to know if you won't alter your decision, and go to-night. You and I have been friends, and good comrades in the past. Will you help me a little now?"

"In what way?" she asked coldly.

"There is a gentleman, a friend of mine, coming to Mrs. Butler's to-night, to whom I would like to introduce you, and get you to be as fascinating as you know how."

"Do you wish him to fall in love with me?"

"Yes, precisely that."

"And shall I return the compliment?"

"No; I cannot recommend him as a permanency. But you've mastered the art of flirting to perfection, and it might be a great assistance to me, if you would practice it a little on him."

"I never flirted with you, Henry," said Ada reproachfully. "If you want my help now, you must be a little more frank."

"Well, I know I can trust you. I have gone

into an operation with this man that promises well, and if it succeeds will make my fortune. But, as you know, money is scarce now; he has it in his power to seriously embarrass me, if he goes right off, as he now threatens. I want you to hold him by your charming spells till I can mature my plans."

She was on the point of asking him what those plans were, but reflected that she would learn no more than he chose to tell. Here was offered a better chance to find out what she wished to know. She believed her cousin was playing a desperately bold game, and might be tripped up. Still she had great faith in his ability, and her heart suggested that if she helped him to succeed, he would ask her to share the results. So, after a moment's hesitation she looked up with a winning smile, and said: "I believe your old comrade never refused you anything yet, Hal. She won't begin to-night."

He took both of her hands and looked steadily in her lustrous black eyes, that were full of tenderness; then stooped and printed a kiss on her lips, whispering, "That's my thanks now;" and as he led her to the door, added, "You will find I know how to pay my debts with interest."

His look and touch said more than the words, and she went to her room half doubting, half believing.

Just at the close of this interview, Maurice Graham stepped up on the veranda, fronting which was the library window, with its blinds yet open. He instantly drew back, but not till he had witnessed the scene we have just described. He knew it was no mere cousinly parting; and a pang of jealousy stung his heart. He had loved Ada too truly to be freed from all regard for her immediately. Therefore, instead of entering the house he paced up and down the long avenue, while passion urged him to go in and accuse both Ada and Hunt of false dealing, and assert his claims. Then reason told him that he had none, and that he should be thankful he had discovered Ada's duplicity in time to avoid being further betrayed. But what did Hunt mean by his open attentions to Miss Earle? Was he only amusing himself at her expense, and did she suspect it, and for that reason ask him to be her escort to the party? But how could he in his present mood endure a long evening among comparative strangers? He thought that he would make an excuse of business in town, and return just in time to bring her home.

Having reached this conclusion he went in to make his toilet, and on the stairs met Ada in full evening dress. She stopped him, and held out her hand, saying in a reproachful tone, "Won't you forgive me, Mr. Graham, for acting so foolishly last

night? I am such a timid creature, I lose all presence of mind when I am frightened."

"I don't know why you should ask my forgiveness, Miss Ada. I have made no charges."

"Ah! but it is easy to see that I have offended you. We used to be such warm friends."

And she looked up with soft appeal in her beautiful eyes. He stood for a moment dazzled, captivated by her charms. Never had she appeared more lovely. There was a grace and dignity in every fold of her rich dress and line of her lithe figure; and her bewitching smile shone upon him so sweetly, that passion urged him to declare why she had disappointed him,—to beg her to prove that all that fair seeming was what he had really believed but the day before; that his vision had cheated him an hour ago, and that it was some painful dream, and this the blessed awakening. So strong was the tide of feeling, that he might have shown his weakness, had not Hunt just then opened the door; he caught a gleam of his mocking smile ere it closed: turning he looked full in Ada's eyes, and said:


"I acknowledge that I was disappointed in your conduct last night. Not that you were frightened, but because of your cruel indifference to the fate of the wounded man, after your former protestations of philanthropy. It is well sometimes that a sudden flash reveals the mask, and shows the real person within."

"No one will ever accuse you of carrying two faces, Mr. Graham," said Ada with a light laugh.

"I have no wish to," he replied quietly, as he passed to his room.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.

HEN Hunt saw his cousin Ada, as the ladies all gathered in the parlor before starting, he thought that she had never appeared to greater advantage, and he congratulated himself on his ruse, for he had not a doubt now of its success. She wore a cream-colored silk, heavily trimmed with rich black lace, given her by old Mrs. Gordon in a rarely generous mood. Her dress showed no other color, except a cluster of scarlet geraniums in her hair, and in the lace at her throat.

Julia felt very insignificant beside her, and was provoked that Ada had changed her mind, and again taken possession of her cousin. She was also very much annoyed, that she had been so foolish as to decline Mr. Hunt's offer as escort, when she saw how much handsomer and more distinguished was his appearance than Maurice Graham's. Julia's attractiveness depended very much on her animated expression; and to-night her mood was singularly uncomfortable. Everything had gone wrong all day, and she was dissatisfied with herself and all

about her. She was jealous of Ada, and puzzled to understand Hunt's conduct, while not sure of her own feelings. It did not improve her humor to notice the admiration that followed Ada, as she and Hunt preceded them into the crowded drawing-room, and to overhear a remark, "What a pity Miss Earle doesn't look more like her sister, Mrs. Gordon is so handsome."

Indeed, Julia seemed fated to hear things not intended for her ears. Early in the evening she was standing close behind a door, leading into a little reception-room, waiting while her partner was completing a set for a quadrille, when she recognized Hunt's voice saying in a low tone to a stranger who had just arrived, "Why, Stokes, I had almost given you up."

"I shouldn't have come at all if I hadn't been sure of seeing you here. I tell you what it is, Hunt, I can't be hanging 'round any longer; you and I must have a settlement."

"Confound it, Stokes, can't you have a little patience? Do you expect a man can raise such a sum in a week, when business is at a dead lock? You will not lose by delay. I'm just getting my plans to bear; but we will talk this over to-morrow. Come in, and I will introduce you to the most beautiful woman you ever saw, East or West."

"What! the heiress? Arn't you afraid I'll cut you out?"

"No, no; I'll not give you a chance. How did you know about her?"

"Oh! I know more than you think. Is the bird caught yet, or still on the bush?"

"I'll leave you to judge; you claim such unlimited knowledge, it would be superfluous to enlighten you further."

They then entered the parlor, and Julia drew back still further into her corner. She could see Hunt introduce his companion to Ada, and from his manner, and her gracious reception of the stranger, Julia's quick wit surmised that it was a preconcerted arrangement between the cousins. But who was this Stokes? She scanned his face and figure closely, and came to the conclusion, dressed as he was in the height of fashion, with diamond studs, and numerous seals to his heavy gold chain, that he was shoddy through and through. She saw that he had not the ease of one accustomed to such gatherings, and the restless movements of his sharp, gray eyes, even while listening to Ada's talk, convinced her that it was no mere desire for pleasure that drew him there.

But what was Hunt trying to accomplish through this man, and what did they mean about the heir-ess? It was a mystery she must unravel, for it was evident she was in some way involved. If she could only keep in that corner and watch, unnoticed, all the evening—but she saw Hunt's eyes

roving about as if in search of her; her partner had returned with the set complete, the music struck up, and she had to appear and play her part.

When the quadrille was finished, Hunt claimed her, and she was soon whirling with him down the long rooms, to one of Strauss' melodious waltzes. At first she was conscious only of the buoyant motion, in which she seemed floating on the sweet rhythm of the music, but, ere long, she realized that Ada and her companion were watching them; and that Hunt had assumed a very appropriating manner toward her; so she paused, and said that she was tired and wished to join Grace.

Here a large circle gathered round them. She saw that Hunt was one of the most conspicuous persons in the company, and that ladies and gentlemen eagerly sought his attention. He talked well, and on subjects in which Julia was interested, so that after a time she forgot herself and became very animated, thus appearing to better advantage. This was the object Hunt wished to attain; and Julia, from being passed by unnoticed, became the central attraction of the evening.

Meanwhile, Ada had drawn Stokes into the conservatory, and so exercised her witching powers that he soon forgot all others.

By this time Graham had returned, and as he stood in the hall, talking with his host, he had a

full view of her graceful form and perfect profile, thrown against the dark green background of orange-leaves, while she exerted the same fascinating arts to captivate the man then at her side, that she had so often practiced on him. He believed that he had the true key to her character now. As he watched her, he recalled her words and manner the night previous, and another verse of the lines Julia had then repeated, came to his mind like a personal experience.

“I look on my heart and marvel
If love were ever its own,
If the spring of promise brightened,
And the summer of passion shone.”

It seemed, in the untimely frost that had blasted his hopes, as if no future love could ever rise from the grave of that past.

After supper he joined Julia, and said, “Miss Earle, I am ready to act as your bodyguard, whenever you wish to return.”

“And your six-shooter, also, I hope.”

“It is safe in the sleigh, but I think we will have no occasion for its use.”

Just then Hunt came up and said, “Graham, will you loan Miss Julia and myself the use of your cutter, and take my place in the family sleigh? She expressed fatigue before supper; and I thought as Grace and Ada are not ready yet, we would not wait for them.”

"I have already offered to see Miss Earle home, whenever she is ready. If she prefers to change, of course I withdraw, and the cutter is at your service."

"Indeed, Mr. Graham, it was I who threw myself upon your gallantry. I will not release you yet. As you were up all last night, and I am unusually tired, I think we had better quietly bid adieu to our hostess, and depart."

This was a turn of affairs Hunt had not expected; but he was obliged to accept the situation with the best grace he could, as Julia requested him to explain matters to Grace.

When they had taken their seats in the sleigh, and were again rapidly passing over the smooth snow, Graham said, "What a contrast was the scene we have just left, and the one at Malone's cottage, last night."

"Do you know, I never realized that there were such fearful contrasts? It has made me uncomfortable all day."

"Is that the strongest feeling so near an approach to sudden death and sore trouble could arouse, Miss Julia," asked Graham looking at her earnestly.

Her eyes fell, and lip quivered for a moment, as his words renewed the conflict, conscience and inclination had been waging all day. "Really, Mr. Graham," she replied in a low voice, "I was ter-

ribly frightened last night." But, rallying, with a change of tone, she added, "I must say I prefer the scenes we have just left, for I acknowledge being very fond of the 'poms and vanities of this wicked world.'"

"Yes, Miss Julia, but one cannot go dancing all the way through life. These terrible realities are pretty sure to find us somewhere."

"Well, I think you will have to give me a little longer grace, before I take the saintly orders. I don't think I could combine both as conveniently as Miss Ada."

A cloud of pain darkened Maurice's face as he quickly answered, "It is not *grace* from me you need, and I fear the shortcomings of others won't avail us much up there."

Then he dropped the subject, and began telling her some Indian legend connected with the region through which they were passing. He held her interest so completely, that she could hardly believe it possible, when the sleigh entered the gate, and in a few moments brought them home.

After retiring to her room, she sat down in front of the bright grate, and gave herself up to thought. She did not revert to the conversation coming home. That was put by for a more convenient season. But what did Hunt mean by his attentions to her, and what was the significance of those remarks she overheard?

She was shrewd, and worldly-wise enough to know that her large fortune made her more attractive than her personal charms alone could have done. But she had her romantic fancies, and she had believed till now that Hunt truly sought her for herself alone; after what Grace had told her of his success in business, and the flattering attention bestowed upon him that evening, and through him upon her, she could not be convinced that he was seeking her solely from mercenary motives.

She resolved to tell Grace in the morning, and see what she thought of it. Meanwhile, she would not repulse Hunt entirely; but ward off any closer intimacy, till she felt assured all was right. For this reason she had avoided the ride home with him. Ada had been using Graham for her schemes. Julia felt that she might now give him a little employment. The cool indifference he generally manifested toward her, made her feel that there was no danger for him. Perhaps when he knew her better, they might become good friends, and there was more of him than she had supposed.

The next day Grace told Julia, that she was going to issue cards for a party the following week. Julia expressed her pleasure, and said, "Suppose you make it a fancy-dress affair. That will be something out of the beaten track, and if

you will let me exercise my taste in the general arrangements, I think I can produce something very novel, that will be long remembered in these regions. You know I have a special gift in that line ; indeed, it is my one talent."

"You shall do as you please, it is your party ; but it isn't easy to procure costumes here."

"Let them set their wits to work, and see what they can do. You take the character of Lady Washington. It is not at all new, but best adapted to you as hostess, and the dress and powdered hair will be very becoming."

"What costume will you take?"

"Oh ! I can't tell yet. I have an idea. Time will show if I can develop it. Now tell me, Grace, who was that gentleman with Ada, last evening?"

"A business acquaintance of the firm. I was introduced to him. Frank wants me to show him some attention, so I shall invite him here next Thursday."

"O Grace ! he is no real gentleman."

"I know he doesn't seem much accustomed to society. But it is often necessary for us to invite people we don't care to make intimate friends, for policy's sake."

"But who is he, and what can Frank and Mr. Hunt have to do with him, that they must treat him with so much consideration?"

"I don't pretend to know much about their affairs, but I am willing to ask him if it will gratify the gentlemen. You needn't be introduced. Ada seems inclined to amuse herself with him. What induced you to step in between her and Maurice Graham last night? Really, Julia, I think it is very mean and wrong for a girl in your position, to try to break up an attachment between two situated as they are, when it is only for your own convenience or amusement."

"Yes, dear old Gracie, that would be true if your premises were correct. But Miss Ada disenchanted Mr. Graham so completely on that sleigh-ride, that I don't think my monopoly last night could come under your censure. And his feeling for me is only that of benevolent compassion for a wicked little sinner. He lectured me on my shortcomings nearly all the way home. Nevertheless, I like him all the better, and am determined that we shall be really good friends some day."

"Julia, you run on so fast that you take my breath away. What did Ada do?"

"Oh! never mind that now. Just listen while I tell you what I overheard last night."

She then repeated the conversation between Hunt and Stokes, and her fears regarding it. But Grace laughed, and said, "It is very probable that there is some payment, and they want to get more time. As for his calling you 'the heiress,' my dear, you

ought to know that is a penalty you must pay for having more money than your share among other girls. I could easily imagine that he might seek you for your fortune. But to accuse a man in Mr. Hunt's position, with his means and opportunities, of deliberately seeking you from mercenary motives is unworthy of him. I have seen for some time that he is growing very fond of you, and he takes no pains to hide his feelings. Oh Julia, it would be so delightful to have you settled near me. I am sure, Mr. Hunt is an honorable man, and, next to Frank, there is no one I have more confidence in."

Julia was inclined to take her sister's view of the case. Still, she did not feel wholly satisfied, and resolved not to be hurried.

A few days before the party, Julia finding the air pleasant, decided to visit some of the miners' cottages. Putting on a short, dark walking-suit, she told Grace that she was going out for a "constitutional," and with a light, quick step she soon passed beyond the private grounds, and down the road, till she came below the breaker. Here she turned off into a little foot-path, following the base of the great culm pile, where boys and girls of all sizes were picking good coal from the dust; some dropping it into little tin pails, others into baskets, which, when full, would sorely tax their strength. Her heart ached, as she noted their thin dress, and often

pinched faces, and little bare feet, purple with cold, scrambling in the black dirt and snow. She stopped, and asked them to find her specimens of coal with fern-leaves impressed on them, promising to pay for them on her return.

Avoiding nearer approach to the breaker, she then walked up a steep hill, desiring to reach the other end of the village. Suddenly she was arrested by seeing quite a large cavity, where the earth had sunk several feet below the surface. While gazing down she heard approaching voices, and saw three middle-aged miners just about to pass her. With a frank, winning smile she asked the nearest, "Can you tell me what has caused this?"

"Certainly," he answered, as his face lit up in response to her manner. The others paused and drew near the sink-hole, as he continued, "You see, Miss, one of the mines near the surface was mostly worked out, and the supports gave way, letting it down. You mind there, where the coal vein shows," pointing to a dark spot visible through the snow.

"Was any one hurt when it fell?"

"No. They generally happen at night, but make a big noise though. If near, you'd think it were an earthquake."

"Isn't there danger wherever there is a mine? And if it's under your houses, what is to keep them up?"

"Oh, we know where there's danger, and avoid it in time," said another man. "But, Miss, where I was workin' once, a much larger piece of ground sank, than any round here ; and a house on it was taken down and entirely buried from sight."

"Oh ! Surely there were no people in it ?"

"Yes, the family was all comfortably asleep when the crash came. They were buried alive. It were an awful thing, for they must have been smothered."

"Could nothing be done to help them ?"

"Oh, there were tons and tons of earth on top of 'em. It was no use. They couldn't be alive."

"Did you ever see a coal mine, Miss?" asked the first speaker.

"No. I am a stranger, and a Yankee you will think by the questions I ask."

"It's a pity they wasn't workin', so you could go down. But perhaps you'd be afraid ?"

"Not she ! I'd trust her for that. She's got the grit to go where she'd take a notion," said the first speaker.

"Thank you for the compliment," said Julia laughing. "I think I would go. But I am more sorry for your sake, than mine, that the mines are closed."

A cloud passed over the men's faces, and one answered, "Well, ma'am, we'd go in to-morrow, if the bosses would give us our rights."

“And what are your rights?”

“The same we had last year, Miss?”

“But I’ve been told coal don’t bring as high a price now. How can they afford to give it?”

“It costs us just as much work, time, and money to dig it out. Let ’em go wid less luxuries and fine parties, and not economize on us poor folk, who have a hard pull to make both ends meet, at the best.”

“Really, there is a deal of truth in that; but then you can’t expect high wages for work that don’t pay. If they have more coal on hand than they can sell, what are they to do?” asked Julia.

“Stop our wages till they could work it off, has been their plan. Now we’ve stopped, till they are ready to take us at our terms.”

“Well, I am only a young girl. I don’t pretend to understand these questions. But, according to my notion, you are injuring yourselves more than you can them; and if I were a man, nobody would keep me idle for months. If I could not do one thing, I would another.”

“That’s easy to say, Miss. But them little white hands of your’n have never had to earn a livin’.”

“No; yet I believe, as one of you said, I’d have ‘the grit’ to do it, if necessary. I am obliged to you however, for answering my questions so kindly; and I hope I may have a chance of seeing you under-ground. That sounds rather solemn; but

I'd soon put you there, if I had my way. Good-bye."

"Good luck to you, Miss, and we'd be glad to see you there," responded the men in a hearty voice.

Julia walked on, and as she viewed the cold dreary landscape, and small dark houses, without a line of beauty or color about them, she shuddered at the thought of a lifetime spent in such surroundings; and she drew her wraps closer about her, as she felt the sharp air, for heavy clouds had gradually veiled the bright winter sky. Yet with a buoyant step she walked down the street, between the rows of houses, till a pale, thinly clad girl about her own age passed carrying a heavy basket of the coal she had picked up, while her cough sounded hollow and racking, as she slowly moved by. Julia looked at her, and thought, "Why should there be such a difference in her lot and mine? Why should I be clothed in soft raiment and fare sumptuously every day, while she goes cold and hungry? Certainly it's no fault of hers. And surely no good deeds of mine brought my wealth and luxuries."

Then dimly there came to her mind a new sense of stewardship, and the use of her talents which would one day be required—not mere careless, free-handed charity, that costs no trouble or self-denial; but a seeking out of the truly deserving,

and an effort to lighten somewhat the weight of the world's suffering and destitution.

Seeing a tidy, middle-aged woman in a doorway, Julia stepped up and asked: "Would you please give me a glass of water, and let me sit down a few minutes, I have taken a long walk this morning?"

"Surely—come in, Miss, an' take a chair; I've just been scrubbin', an' I fear me floor is damp; but here's a bench to put under yer feet."

"Thank you. How clean and nice your room looks!" And Julia glanced around with an appreciative eye, at the bare floor and scanty furniture, and asked: "Are you a native of this country?"

"No, Miss, we're Welsh; but I've been here forty year, and that's mor'n you can say," she added with a laugh, as she brought the water.

"Yes, indeed; but then I've seen Wales since you have."

"Oh! have you been there, an' can you speak Welsh, Miss?" said the woman, drawing a chair close beside her, and sitting, in her eagerness, on the extreme edge, unconscious that the water was dripping from the tumbler, upon her clean floor.

"Oh no, I can't speak it; indeed, I think it the most unspeakable language in the world; worse than the German," said Julia, laughing; "and when written, it looks to me as if you had just jumbled all the letters in the alphabet together, then spilled

them out, and, whatever came first, made a word which you called what you please."

"Well, now, I think it the nicest and best that man ever spoke. But whereabouts was you, Miss?"

"We visited Mount Snowdon, and the tremendous cliff of Penmaen-mawr. We spent days roaming among the lovely glens, and fishing in the little mountain lakes, or tarns, as they call them. Oh! I was charmed with the scenery in Wales."

"Were you at the vale of Llangollan, Miss? Up the far end of that were my home. My father owned a small sheep-farm, an' William Jones (that's my husband) lived just above us. It wasn't easy makin' a livin' there, ye see, Miss, for the higher up, the more barren the mountains are; so he went to work, soon as he growed up, in the coal mines in South Wales."

"You grew up together, then? Did he come back for you?" asked Julia, eager to draw out the woman's history.

"Oh yes, Miss. We knowed each other ever since we were wee little tots, an' many's the time we've played together in the river Dee and fished in the tarns you's speakin' of. You don't know how homesick hearin' about it agin makes me," and tears rolled unheeded down her cheeks, as she looked at the few embers burning on the hearth, while memory recalled the sweet wild glens, and steep mountain passes trod by tireless little feet.

And she heaved a weary sigh as she thought of the long years of labor and exile that seemed to have gone for naught.

After a moment's pause she continued: "Soon as William made a little ahead, Miss, he come back to his old home. It was one summer when they'd slack work at the mines. Then he asked me would I go back with him to Glamorganshire. Ye can well guess my answer. Maybe ye know by experience yerself, Miss," she said with a glance of humor shining through her tears, "what sort of walks we took that summer, when the moon was shining down on the river, and the air blowing fresh from new-cut hay. Ah, well, I were always home-sick in South Wales, and times got hard and work slack. Then a friend wrote us to come here; that it looked more like our old home. And so it does, 'specially in summer."

"How are you getting on now? Have you any children?"

"But poorly, ma'am. William has not been workin' for a long spell, an' we've six children. Lizzie is livin' in service, and that brings us in a little, or we'd 'most starve."

"Did your husband strike with the others?"

"No, Miss," said the woman, speaking low. "He held out agin' it to the last. So did Tom, my eldest son. But now he is for keepin' out. That's the way with the Welsh. They'll work if

let be, generally. But if they once go out, they'll stay longer nor the rest. William knows how these strikes end, an' he didn't want it. You'll not find a soberer, honester man than my William, Miss. But sometimes I hardly know him, he's gettin' so different. We's often pinched for food, and it makes him cross to see the childer go hungry. We've used up all our savin's laid by, for you know it couldn't be much in such a family, and the help we get don't go far."

"Couldn't your husband get work anywhere?"

"Not in the mines, Miss. It wouldn't be safe for him. You'll not know what happened poor John Malone?"

"Yes," said Julia indignantly. "Who did that cruel deed?"

"How can I tell? It might be your next-door neighbor."

"Well, I call it oppression and murder."

"That's a fact, Miss, and I'll own to you it's the worst kind of slavery. There's a deal of fine talk about our rights, but many would be glad to work now, for what they could get, if they dared."

"I will speak to Mr. Graham about your husband, and see if something can't be done."

"Why, do you know him? I thought you were a stranger. We often have visitors in summer when the mines are workin'."

"No, I am Miss Earle, Mrs. Gordon's sister, vis-

iting at Cedar Ridge. I came out for a walk this morning, and I did not realize how far I had gone, but I am nicely rested now. Mrs. Jones," she added, rising to go, "will you please use this for anything the children may need?" handing her a bill.

"God bless you, Miss Earle. But I don't like to take the money. Hearin' about home made my heart so full, and you was so kind that all my troubles came right out. But it has done me a power of good. I'll always be glad to see you."

"It is for the children, Mrs. Jones," said Julia, as she pressed it into her hand with a hearty shake, and tripped down the steps, away to the spot where she saw a little group eagerly waiting with their specimens for the promised reward. Her pocket was heavier, if her purse was lighter, when she reached Cedar Ridge.

"O Julia, where have you been?" asked Grace as she entered the dining-room, long after the hour for luncheon.

"Taking a glimpse of the 'other set,' and how they live," she replied carelessly.

"You don't mean you've been among the miners? How very imprudent, Julia."

"Maybe it was. But I was very politely treated, and I mean to see more, and do more for them. Just think; within a mile of us are people almost starving! If you would go among them and find

out the truly deserving, it would be better for both. You and many of 'our set' put all working-people down as low-minded, cross, and vulgar. There are many such, God knows. But I have always met with real courtesy, and I talked this morning with a woman who was as much a lady in feeling as you or I."

"I am willing to help the deserving. But there is no use, I can't go among them, Julia; I don't know how to meet them, and always get imposed on. Besides, it's their own leaders who keep them idle."

"That may be, and I hate tyrannies, disguised as liberties or otherwise. If these men should make a raid against your colliery, I'd defend it to the death, and I'd make the leaders suffer. But I detest this howling down of the laboring class, as all bad, all selfish and designing; when, perhaps, if we had to struggle in a hand-to-hand fight with poverty and ignorance we would be far worse. I wish Mr. Graham were here; I want his help, for he knows all about them."

"You must wait till he does return, before you go on any more missions. Then, if he approves, I will not object."

The conversation then turned on preparations for the party, and Julia's philanthropic plans were forgotten in the more absorbing discussion of costumes and decorations

CHAPTER IX.

A RIDE FOR LIFE.



THE night of the masquerade came at last, and everything was done to render it a success. The hot-houses were robbed of their choicest plants, which Julia arranged in retired nooks and corners, making of them perfect bowers of fragrance and bloom, while long wreaths of flowers were festooned from arch to arch, dividing the apartments.

Ere long the guests arrived, and through the brilliant rooms the gorgeous toilets mingled like the shifting colors of a kaleidoscope. From an invisible orchestra floated out soft, airy music, changing later to a measured cadence, that set all the light young feet in motion.

Winding through the mazes of the same dance, might be seen a gay Turk in white turban and scarlet jacket, all bespangled and glittering, and a sable draped nun, clasping her beads, or a harlequin in striped jerkin and hose, ringing his bells, as he whirls some stately Queen of Scots; jostling as he passes Old Mortality and a flower-girl talking to-

gether, or a fierce Indian in wampum and feathers, by the side of a meek little Quakeress.

Julia chose to represent the spirit of winter, and never was it more perfectly executed. Her dress was of soft white lace dipped in alum water, till it glistened like frost-work, while her veil of the same material, fastened to a swan's-down cap, fell in graceful folds, and floated about her. Her brown curls were showered with glittering powder, while bands and flakes of swan's-down twined round her, like graceful snow-wreaths, mingled with the cold sheen of sparkling diamonds. Ada Hunt remembered her cousin's remark, that she ought to be an eastern sultana, and decided to assume that character; and none of the enchanting princesses of the Arabian nights could have been more beautiful. Over a rich brocade of scarlet and gold she wore a long azure veil, studded with pearls, while a jeweled crown rested lightly on her dark braids, and broad bands of gilt girded her waist and arms. That much of the glitter was tinsel and glass, did not detract from the brilliant effect.

After supper Julia's delicate dress became the victim of awkward feet, and she was obliged to seek the dressing-room to repair damages. Finding the broad staircase taken possession of by nymphs and fairies with their several admirers, she passed through a passageway between the library

and dining-room toward her room. Feeling a strong draft of air she looked into the library and noticed one window opened, as she supposed, to cool off the house, which the lights and number of guests made unusually warm.

The wind had extinguished the light, but through the open door one could distinctly see the gay scene beyond. Just as she was passing, she heard a voice from outside say, in a hoarse whisper, "Whist, Sam! there's Hunt, dressed in purple velvet. Curse him! That looks as if he couldn't afford our old wages!"

Julia stopped as if spell-bound. She immediately suspected that some of the miners were looking on. Perhaps they meant mischief. She must find out who they were and what were their intentions. So she glided through the dark shadows, till near enough to the window to both see and hear. Finding only two men, she resolved to listen, instead of giving any alarm.

"We'll bring him to such terms soon, he'll be glad to pay us whatever we choose," replied Walker.

"How so?" asked Bill McQuaid.

"I can't tell you here. We'll move further off soon, but I first want to know if they've asked Stokes to their party."

"Who is he?"

"Only an old army contractor and desperate

gambler, dressed up as a gentleman. He's a particular friend of our boss just now."

"How cum you to know him?"

"Don't you remember, I was quartermaster of our brigade for a while? He was down there then arranging to deliver a contract for army overcoats. My! he used to do the greatest amount of gambling. Why he'd bet on the battles, and such like. And he always won, I can't tell ye how, except that the divil helped his own. Then, when those coats came, they were so rotten you could stick your finger through them anywhere; would hardly hold together while the men were trying them on. If he'd been on hand then, it's short grace the boys would have given him."

"Do you think our bosses are up to bettin' or—"

"Pshaw, man! Stokes is above that now. Didn't you ever hear of gambling in stocks?"

"Can't say I'm posted. But, Sam, have you seen the superintendent yet?"

"No, they say he's gone to Philadelphia, and I mor'n suspect it's to get men to start up the mines."

"By —, if he does that he'll be sorry. Look here; couldn't one make a splendid haul some dark night! See the silver lyin' round in there," pointing to the dining-room, plainly revealed from their position by a glass door opening into the library.

"Bah! you'd only get quarters in State's-prison

for your pains. There's little use trying that game, unless you are a gentleman thief, and can do your stealing by the thousand. Come let's go to the clump of cedars in front of them windows; we can see better, and I've got something to tell you. Some one might come in here. It's time we had a little part in this play."

The men then cautiously moved off, and Julia watched till she saw them take a position on the outskirts of the clump. What should she do? She had heard enough to make it absolutely necessary that she should know more. Quick as thought she ran up to the dressing-room, secured a black domino, and drew a pair of rubbers over her white slippers; then stole softly down a private stairs, and out of a basement door, back of the cedars. No one noticed her, and carefully working her way round under the shadow of shrubbery, she came to a position behind the men, where crouching down low among the trees, she listened breathlessly to their conversation.

"I don't know about doin' that job for Boss Malcome. We'll have Dan down on us, an' he's got a power of influence among many here. We'd better make a raid, stop the pumps, put out the fires; and if anybody gets hurt it's their look out," said Walker.

"I'd like to get both of them chaps out of the way. I hate Ned Malcome, for I've a notion he's

trying to make up to Bessie Walker, though she don't seem to take to him."

"Don't be too sure of that. I met them walking very lovingly together a few nights ago."

Bill McQuaid ripped out a terrible oath, and added, "I'll fix him; you look out for the rest. We'd better meet to-morrow at the big rock an' talk it up. That's better than behind Walker's store; I'll have all the fellers there."

"Yes, we must have force enough to carry all before us. See! that's Stokes talkin' to that stunin' lookin' woman in blue veil and gold crown. Curse him, an't he swell to-night! But I believe him a bigger scamp than you, Bill."

"That's sayin' a good deal. I'd like to know what he's up to with our boss."

During this conversation Julia stood shivering with terror and cold, while in front of her, almost within reach, were the two conspirators, plotting riot and murder; while beyond she saw the warm brilliant parlors, and gay throng flitting to and fro, while melodious strains of music were wafted on the night air. As she watched, she saw Hunt come forward and claim Ada from Stokes, then clasping her waist, together they floated down the long rooms. She noted the expression of anger and jealousy visible on Stokes' face, and it seemed but the reflection of her own feelings. During the past week she had been indulging the belief that Hunt

really loved her, and that he was all her sister's words and her own fancy painted him. Now her present position and the gay scene beyond seemed but the phantasm of a feverish dream. If she could only shriek out her terror, the awful nightmare would pass. She made a slight movement, and one of the men looking back said, "Hark! didn't you hear something?"

This roused her to a sense of danger, and she became motionless as the trees beside her. They saw nothing to create suspicion and supposed it was only the wind swaying the branches. Then Bill said, "Come. It's deuced cold. I've seen enough of this. Let's be movin'," and shaking his fists at the windows, he added, "We'll give 'em another party soon."

"Ay, ay. It will be more lively, if not so gay."

Then they strode down the avenue. When out of sight, Julia emerged; and though stiff and cramped, succeeded in reaching her room unobserved.

Here she threw off her black robe, and tried to remove the deadly chills creeping over her. In a few moments Grace knocked at her door, and when admitted, said, "Isn't your dress repaired yet? What has kept you so long? Several are asking for you."

"I don't feel very well. Won't you bring me a

little wine quietly? I will have my dress ready then, and come down."

Grace was alarmed at her sister's pale face, and was about to insist on her not appearing again; but Julia's whole effort now was to keep up, and avoid suspicion till the company left, and she had time to think what was best to be done. Soon she was again in the crowd, apparently the gayest of the gay. By the time the guests all left, she came to the conclusion that she ought to tell Hunt that night what she had overheard, so that he could take immediate steps to secure the safety of the colliery.

As she passed through the deserted parlors, she came upon Grace, making final preparations for the night. On inquiring for Hunt, she told her that he had complained of a headache and retired some time before all the guests left.

Julia reflected that if she told her sister, or Frank, they would be very much alarmed, and there could be nothing done before morning. She would then be sure to see Hunt; so she quietly sought her room. She had heard enough of their situation with the miners, to realize that this was an extremely serious and delicate affair, and if not managed judiciously, might precipitate the most disastrous consequences. She had not much confidence in her brother-in-law's judgment, and felt an anxious wish that Graham was at home. Then

her thoughts reverted to the insinuations Walker had thrown out against Stokes and his intimacy with Hunt. All her suspicions were again fully aroused. But worn out with fatigue, and stupefied by the unusual stimulus she had taken, she soon fell into a heavy sleep.

When she awoke next morning, her watch told her that it was nearly noon. Frightened at the late hour, she dressed rapidly and went down to seek Hunt; but to her dismay, found that both he and Frank Gordon had gone to a distant town, and would not be back till the late train that night. The mischief might be done before their return. There was only one resource left. That was to find Bessie Walker and tell her. If she loved Ned Malcome, she would find a way of warning him. There was no use alarming her sister. So she said that she wanted to do some shopping in the town, and asked if John could drive her down, while the air was warm and pleasant.

Grace assented, and she soon reached the town and found Walker's store. Leaving the sleigh a little distance off, she quietly stepped to the private entrance, and knocked. A bright young girl answered her summons, with large brown eyes full of wonder, as she saw a strange lady on the steps. Julia held out her hand and said, "I am sure this must be Miss Bessie Walker."

"Yes," was the hesitating reply; "did you wish to see me?"

"I do, and alone," she almost whispered, coming close to her. Bessie glanced back at the living-room, where were her mother and the children; then said: "I don't know, ma'am, how I can manage that—or what you can want," she added with a half suspicious glance.

But Julia's frank manner won her confidence, as much as her words, when she said, "I have something very important to tell you. One you care very much for is in danger; I think you alone can help him. Put on your hat and make some excuse to join me. I am Miss Earle—Mrs. Gordon's sister. I'll wait for you on the next block."

Bessie said that she would come immediately; then Julia walked slowly to and fro, till she saw her, when tapping her shoulder she bade her follow her to the sleigh. Having taken their seats she ordered the coachman to drive to a quiet street, and bidding him drive slowly told her in a few rapid words what she had overheard of Walker's plan to attack the colliery and injure Malcome.

"Did you tell Mr. Graham?" asked Bessie.

"No, he is away. So is Mr. Hunt and brother Frank. I don't know Malcome, so could rely on you only."

"I must go to Ned at once. Uncle Sam will be sure to know that they are all away, and take this chance," said Bessie.

"Stay in the sleigh, and we'll drive there."

"Thank you, Miss Earle. That will be the quickest."

They were soon whirling rapidly toward the breaker. Neither spoke, till near the spot Bessie said, "They haven't come yet, please let me out here. I must coax Ned away; it is all that can be done now."

"Couldn't he get some of the men to help him, who wouldn't approve of the raid? I must see him too. There is no one else to act for the safety of the works. I'll wait till you bring him here."

Bessie assented, then flew down to the little office, and laid a light hand on Malcome's shoulder before he saw her. He turned quickly and exclaimed, "Why, Bessie, how came you here?"

"Ned, come away with me. You are in great danger," she cried; then, catching her breath, she rapidly told him what threatened him, and how she had found it out, ending her story by begging him to leave at once. The other men wouldn't protect him, and he alone would be sacrificed.

Ned knew that this was true, but it seemed like cowardly desertion to fly from his post, before they had even struck a blow, when he would be leaving his employers' property defenceless in their absence. No, he must stay and abide by the consequences; his promise to Graham bound him. This decision he tried to explain to Bessie, but she became perfectly frenzied with grief and fear. She hung upon

his arm, begging him if he had any love for her to go with her at once. She pictured the grief and helplessness of his blind mother and delicate sister, if he were killed. "It is your life Bill McQuaid seeks; what can you do against a band of ruffians?" she pleaded. His inclination and judgment urged him to follow her advice, while his honor and pride seemed to bind him to remain. He finally decided to go for his brother and some of the more reliable men to help him. But Bessie urged that, "he did not know who were reliable. No doubt Dan would stand by him, but it was evident her uncle and Bill would get all the roughs from the other collieries they could. The men might be afraid to oppose them and think it safest to remain neutral. He well knew their power of taking revenge on offenders."

"Yes, I know," said Malcome, sadly; "and if they have resolved on my life, I might as well die at my post, as skulking away; they'll be sure to find me."

"Didn't Christ say to his disciples, 'If they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another?' Surely, your duty to a temporal interest can't claim higher fidelity."

"But, Bessie, where can I go? If I return home, I will only expose mother and Annie."

"Go to Bridget McGuire's to-night. They'll not think of seeking you there."

Just then their conversation was interrupted by Julia bursting in upon them, saying: "The raiders are coming! I saw a crowd of men filing down the mountain road, toward the works."

Malcome ran up the steps, to the top of the breaker, and saw that it was indeed so. They were then half a mile away, marching rapidly in a compact body. Springing down stairs, he exclaimed, "My God! they are close upon us! There's no time to lose! This way, quick!"

He led them below the bank, where a valley road wound round the base of Cedar Ridge. Calling to the coachman, on the hill above, he ordered him down there immediately, in Miss Earle's name. John had seen who were coming, and didn't need a second urging to bring him to the spot. Malcome placed the girls in the back seat, then sprang in by John, telling him to take the valley road and drive for life. They must make the turn, and cross the bridge before the mob reached the colliery.

The horses were put under the lash, and they flew over the road. Not a word was spoken till the bridge was passed, and they paused on the bank above, to see what was going on behind them. Looking toward the colliery, they saw a mass of men pouring down upon the works, while a posse made a rush toward the little office, and aimed several shots at the spot where they supposed Malcome stood. He turned pale as he realized the

danger from which he had so narrowly escaped, while Bessie gave a low cry of horror.

"Oh! will they kill the other men?" exclaimed Julia.

"No, I think not; see, they have promised to strike work; some have gone into my room and found out I'm not there. It is possible the firemen may have seen us drive off."

"Do you think they will attack Cedar Ridge?" asked Julia, filled with anxiety about Grace.

"No, I am more afraid they will seek me at home, and frighten mother and Annie, if they don't do worse."

"What shall I do now, and how can I get home?"

"Your best plan, Miss Earle, is to go at once to the bank, where Mr. Hunt is president, find out his whereabouts, and telegraph for him and Mr. Gordon to return by the first train; then send John back with a note to your sister, and wait for them in town. I see the raiders are moving off; we must ride on fast, lest they intercept us."

"I should have told Mr. Hunt last night, but I was so horrified and bewildered that I could not command my wits; I thought I'd surely see him in the morning."

She did not add that the charges against Hunt had, for the time, borne down all other fears.

"Indeed, Miss Earle, I owe my life to your

promptness in seeking Bessie. I shall ever be grateful, and if I can render you a service, I am at your command!" Then, as they reached the suburbs of the town, Malcome added: "I had better leave you here; I don't want to be recognized, or some one may track me. I shall hide till dark, then make my way through the forest to Biddy Aguire's. Bessie, can you send word to Dan, to meet me there?"

This she promised to accomplish, and with an urgent request for him to be cautious, they bade him good-bye and rode on.

When Julia reached the bank, she told the cashier what had happened. He immediately dispatched a message to Hunt and ushered her into his private office to await the reply. When the gentlemen arrived Julia met them at the station, and after they were seated in the sleigh gave them a detailed account of what had happened. Hunt said that they must immediately secure a writ for the sheriff to arrest Walker and McQuaid, the ringleaders, and protect the pump-men.

But they failed in catching the men. Walker saw that he had made a mistake in attempting the raid. The majority of the miners were not in sympathy with such extreme measures; but warning was given him, and he and McQuaid escaped to other regions, where a class of desperadoes had made raids and outrages quite the fashion.

A few days after the events just recorded, Frank Gordon said to his wife at the breakfast-table, "Grace, can we have dinner at two. I want Stokes to dine with us, and he leaves town on the five o'clock train."

"Certainly. Is this a permanent departure?" she asked. Julia and Ada both looked up to hear his answer, as he carelessly replied, "No, only for a few weeks; but Henry and I want to talk over some business matters with him before he goes, and can do it better here."

Julia wondered many times that morning whether the charges brought against Stokes were true, and resolved to lead the conversation in such a way as to find out. When they gathered at the table Maurice Graham had returned. As he took his seat, Hunt asked if he had heard of the raid?

"Yes," he replied. "But how did you discover their plans, Miss Earle?"

"Yes, Julia," said Ada, "you told us you heard them talking by the library window. Did they arrange it all there?"

"No, they only hinted at something, and made me determine to know the rest; then moved off to that clump of cedars fronting the drawing-room windows. I immediately masqueraded in a black domino, as a female spy, surrounded them in the rear—at least made a half circle, and was an unknown visitor at their council of war. Then I set

my wits to work to 'circumwent' them, as Sam Weller would say."

"Oh, Julia!" cried Grace. "That's what made you so pale and chilly when I came to your room. My child! they might have discovered and killed you out there in the darkness, and we never have known."

"I think you would have known if they had tried it; I have strong lungs. Still, I had no wish to exercise them then."

"But did you realize the danger?"

"Yes; but I was resolved to know what they said, if I died for it. Your dose of brandy so befogged my brain that it nearly proved fatal to Malcome. I am a temperance woman, and can't bear such strong potions."

"I think you showed wonderful presence of mind, and courage, Miss Julia, though we had already received proof of that," said Graham.

"Yes, we ought to make you sheriff," added Hunt.

"I warrant you, then I'd find out the whereabouts of Walker and McQuaid, and some other things I want to know too," said Julia, with a keen glance at Stokes.

"You would make Miss Earle a prying woman, a character I detest," said Stokes.

"You like better the clinging, trusting kind; that's very nice if they have a sure support," replied Julia.

"I should think you could easily obtain that," said Stokes, with great suavity.

"Well, I am looking out for a good, sturdy oak; one that isn't making too rapid growth."

Stokes and Hunt looked uneasy. There seemed a hidden meaning in her words. Ada, to cause a diversion, asked if the men made any comments on the party.

"Yes, they admired you exceedingly; and, Mr. Stokes, Mr. Walker recognized you as an old army acquaintance."

"Me!" exclaimed Stokes, evidently very much annoyed; then instantly recovering himself, he replied, carelessly: "I have no recollection of him; I never served in the army."

"He did not speak of you as belonging to the army, but he seemed to know you very well," said Julia, quietly, while her keen eyes detected a shade of pallor on his face. Hunt felt that he must find out what Julia knew of Stokes's antecedents, but the present was no time for investigation, so he made another diversion, by asking Graham whether John Malone was getting well.

"Yes," replied Maurice, "but his wife is failing very fast. I wish she had my saucer of wine-jelly."

"Why, John can take her some this afternoon," said Grace.

"Thank you; it will be a great kindness," answered Graham, as they rose from the table.

Julia followed her sister to the store-room after dinner, and said in her impulsive way. "Grace, do you feel easy in having Frank and Mr. Hunt so mixed up with that Stokes? Is your property placed so that if they lose yours can't be involved?"

"Why, Julia, I am ashamed of you! Do you suppose I can't trust my husband to look after my interests? You allow your violent prejudices to run away with your good sense. I see nothing so bad in that man."

"Sam Walker called him a gambler, and shoddy army contractor. I am not accusing your husband of intentional wrong, but it wouldn't be the first time a wife lost everything through her husband's speculations with a sharper."

"You are certainly very fanciful this afternoon. Mr. Stokes denied knowing Walker. I'll take his word first. I have seen nothing to alarm me, and am not going to imagine troubles when these miners' raids give us enough to worry about."

Julia turned away with a sigh. Her own suspicions were very strong, but the circumstantial evidence was too weak to act upon, so she could only await future developments. Feeling uncomfortable and restless, she proposed going up with the coachman, to see what else Mrs. Malone might need. Grace objected, as it looked like a snow-storm; but Julia urged that it was but a short dis-

tance, and the weather was no more threatening than it had been all day; so, as usual, her stronger will carried the point, and she was soon on her way.

CHAPTER X

A MISERABLE DEATH-BED.



WHEN Julia started on her ride, the clouds hung heavy over the mountains, and the east wind was cutting in its sharpness. She almost repented of her adventure before the cottage was reached. No one answered her knock, so she walked in. Here a painful sight met her eyes. John Malone, with one arm still in a sling, was trying with the other to support his wife, who, in a terrible fit of coughing, seemed about to suffocate. Julia sprang forward, for the paleness of his face made her fear that they would both fall back together. Mrs. Malone gazed at her, wild with terror and suffering. Julia supposed it the death-struggle, and could do nothing but help support her.

At last the paroxysm passed, and she lay back gasping for breath. Julia then raised a window, and, as she fanned her, asked Malone if he had no one to help him.

“Me daughter, Mary, has gone for Biddy Aguire agin. She had a spell a while back, and I belaved this would be her last.”

"Sure, Miss Earle," said the poor woman in a whisper, "is it dyin' I am? I never thought but I'd get well if spring would only cum. Oh! can't the doctor save me? I'm not ready yet."

Then the cough returning, she cried out as soon as it passed, "Oh, I'm feered it'll cum agin; spake to me a comfortin' word, won't ye, Miss Earle, and pray the Lord to have marcy on me sowl!"

Julia could not recall a single verse that would apply to her wants; and how could she who never really prayed for herself, help this dying woman? She had never seen death before, and now this poor creature clung to her as her only refuge.

"Oh! I can't help you," said Julia in distress. "I will go for Mr. Graham. He is a good man aud can read and pray with you."

"Yis, yis; send for him, quick. But maybe he'll not cum. I were allus oneasy when he'd be after talkin' religion. I wouldn't belave I couldn't get well."

Julia thought of her resolution to prepare for the next world when sickness came. Yet here was this woman, after months of wasting illness, on the brink of eternity and looking with perfect dread to what lay beyond.

She longed to flee away from it all, and was about to leave, when Mrs. Malone grasped her hand and in an agonized whisper begged her to stay,

and only send for Mr. Graham. It would have been heartless not to yield, so John was dispatched with the message.

In a short time another coughing fit came on, not as severe as the last, but weakening still more her frail hold on life. Julia could not endure the piteous appeal in her eyes, and in her desperate straits recalled that beautiful hymn, "Rock of Ages," and in a sweet but trembling voice she began to sing the familiar words. She had sung it or heard it many times before, with hardly a thought of its significance, but now it was fraught with a wonderful meaning as the dying woman hung upon every word. She remembered once seeing a picture of a large stone cross standing firm in a dark, stormy ocean, and a half-drowned woman clinging to it with outstretched arms. It seemed now, that poor Mrs. Malone, with the cold waters of death rapidly rising around her, might be clinging thus, if even with a feeble grasp. And the gleam of hope that passed over her face as Julia sang the last verses, seemed, as in the picture, to radiate alone from the cross.

Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling ;
Naked—come to thee for dress ;
Helpless—look to thee for grace ;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

“While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See thee on thy judgment throne :
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.”

“Oh! sing that again,” she whispered. Before Julia finished it the second time, Graham arrived. She saw as he entered that the air was thick with fast-falling snow. Going softly to the bed, he stood silent till the close of the hymn. Mrs. Malone seemed asleep then, and he whispered, “Is she dying?”

“I fear so. She wanted some one to read and pray with her, so I sent for you.”

“Poor woman, she wouldn’t listen to me in the past. It is a sad time now to prepare for eternity. Will you return, Miss Earle? It is beginning to storm very hard; I will do what I can here.”

“I suppose I must go,” said Julia, trying to withdraw her hand; but the sick woman clung to it with a convulsive grasp: “Don’t lave me, I want that hymn agin,” she muttered.

“But Mr. Graham has come, and he will read and pray with you.”

“No, only sing. That comforts me. ‘Foul, I to the fountain fly.’ What’s the rest? I knowed it when a gal.”

“I will not leave her, Mr. Graham. You

may send John home, but you will please stay too?"

"Certainly. Yet the storm may increase so much that you will be kept here all night."

"Never mind, I can't go now."

Soon the woman began to suffer great distress, and her breathing became very labored. Julia fanned her and gently stroked her forehead with a soft, soothing touch. Maurice's estimate of her character changed very much, as he watched her gentle ministrations. He drew near the bed and repeated comforting texts from God's word, then knelt down and in simple, fervent petitions presented her needs to a merciful, long-suffering Saviour. Julia could not tell whether she heard, or had already passed beyond the consciousness of earthly sights and sounds. Her eyes were glassy and fixed, and her face growing gray and cold. Only the labored breathing told that life was not yet extinct.

By this time Mary had returned with Biddy Maguire. As they drew near the bed, Julia raised a warning finger, as if they could disturb the sufferer.

"Ah! me poor darlin'. May God and the blissed Vargin have marcy on her sowl," said Bridget, wiping her eyes with the corner of her old shawl.

The storm without was increasing in fury. Fierce and sharp the wind hissed through the leafless

branches, and twisted and tossed the high tree-tops, whirling white icy splinters torn from them with the round snow pellets, in gusts against the small windows. Julia shuddered, and drew her cloak closer about her, for the bitter blasts often swept through the partly open window.

The wild storm and mournful surroundings acted so strongly on her nerves, that she began sobbing with a violence that shook her frame. This caused an outburst of grief from Malone, his little daughter, and tender-hearted Bridget, and for a time only the sound of weeping broke the stillness. Then Graham sang "Rock of Ages," in a low, yet distinct tone.

As the hymn progressed, it soothed and quieted them all. Mrs. Malone's breathing became easier, and the look of intense pain passed away. When the end really came, none could tell.

About midnight Graham made up the fire, and told Malone it was all over. He and his daughter needed all their strength, and they had better seek some sleep; Bridget would do what was necessary.

Then he drew the old rocking-chair to a comfortable position, and placing a sleigh-robe—which he had kept—upon it, told Julia that she had better try there for a little rest.

She urged him to use it, saying that he needed rest more, and that she could easily wait till morning; but with a gentle assumption of care-

taking authority, he put her in it, saying that she was not used to watching,

Tired out with conflicting feelings and her unusual exertions, she soon fell asleep. He drew a chair near the lamp, to read, but his eyes often lifted and turned toward the young girl sleeping so peacefully, near him. He thought she had never appeared more lovely. With the traces of tears yet upon her face, there was the tired, sorrowful look of a little child; and there was the same unconscious abandonment as she leaned her brown curls, with the little fur cap still upon them, against his bright, warm scarf, which he had folded as a pillow.

At first, he had believed her wholly careless and absorbed in her own pleasure, heedless how it clashed with the comfort of others; but he now saw that she possessed traits of character which would make her an earnest, useful woman, if fully developed and guided by Christian principle. He hoped the impression of that sad death-bed might not be forgotten.

The storm seemed increasing, and high drifts were piling up against the cottage. Sometimes the war of the elements aroused Julia, and she started up, with frightened eyes, at her strange surroundings; then, meeting Graham's kind glance, a realization of her position returned, and, trusting to his care, she again fell asleep.

Maurice thought of this night-watch, in contrast to the one he had kept there a few weeks before. He remembered his bitter, hopeless feeling, when he first realized that he had been the dupe of a heartless coquette. Now, his strongest feeling was thankfulness that he had discovered her true character. But, even yet, her rare beauty and the sweet pathos of her voice, when she sang some of his favorite songs, made his pulses thrill. When once free from the spell of her fascinating arts, he knew her to be utterly false, and this, more than any other cause, had taken him from Cedar Ridge at the time of the miners' raid. He felt that he must see his mother, and feel the benefit of her pure, loving influence for a while, or he would lose all faith in woman. It needed but a short time to remove the glamour of the past few weeks, and as he noted in contrast to Ada's fair seeming his mother's true life, he learned anew the value of self-forgetting service.

But now he turned his thoughts away from the past, and began wondering what destiny was in store for Julia, and what Hunt meant by his continued attentions when he was sure Ada held his heart. As he recalled all he could of the weeks since Julia came, the conviction gradually forced itself upon him that Hunt was seeking her fortune; though why he should have such mercenary motives, with his reputed wealth, Graham could

not understand, except that the avaricious are never satisfied. He resolved to watch, and warn Julia if he saw that she was in danger of becoming interested. At present, he believed her fully equal to the occasion, and that she was amusing herself with the attention, while having no deep interest in any one.

At last the storm spent itself, and the sun rose clear over a pure and peaceful landscape, that did not seem as if it could have felt the fierce conflict of the long night. Julia, waking refreshed, went to the window to look out, and exclaimed; "Oh! Mr. Graham, did you ever see anything more beautiful?"

Maurice came beside her and saw the trees standing against the blue sky, every branch clothed in ermine, and beyond, the mountains perfectly dazzling under the bright sunlight.

"Just look at that glory, then the contrast in here," said Julia.

"May it not be a faint type of the glory and purity of heaven, and the darkness of the present?" asked Graham.

"Do you think she is there?" and Julia glanced toward the motionless figure, then up to the deep blue, from which the storm had swept every vestige of cloud or stain.

"I don't know," said Graham sadly. "She was poor and ignorant, and is now in the hands of a

merciful God. But, oh! Miss Julia, let us not wait till the storm is upon us, but plant our feet firmly now on the 'Rock of Ages,' high and safe above the waves. I would rather feel like David when he cried, 'The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my sure tower, of whom shall I be afraid.' "

Julia looked with a strange feeling of envy and admiration, for his face was full of lofty thought and perfect rest. With a sigh she said, "I wish I felt so safe."

Just then John appeared, having with difficulty forced his horses through the drifts. Grace was anxious about her sister, and wished her to return at once.

Julia stepped over to the bed, and drew back the sheet. There was a more beautiful expression on the face of the dead. Turning to Graham she said: "Will you allow me to meet the expenses here; and any other needs the family may have now?"

"Thank you," replied Graham, "I will ascertain what is necessary. After I have made a few arrangements I will see you safely home."

As they rode down the mountain the sun shone out warm, and the air was unusually soft. Julia rejoiced in the change, but as Graham saw how rapidly the huge snow-drifts were dissolving, he said that he hoped it would not continue long. A freshet would be a very serious matter, raising the

streams and river suddenly with all their accumulation of ice both above and below Cedar Ridge.

Graham's fears in regard to the freshet proved true. The sun continued to shine with unusual warmth all day, and the snow melted into rushing mountain streams, that rapidly forced their way to the river. While the family at Cedar Ridge were still gathered round the table that evening, a servant ran in, forgetting all ceremony in his excitement, and cried:

"The ice is breaking up!"

"Oh! let us go and see it," exclaimed Julia. "We can have a splendid view from the foot of the lawn overhanging the cliff."

All sprang to their feet, and wraps were quickly brought. In a few moments they stood where they could look down on a rushing torrent of water, tossing and whirling huge cakes of ice as if they were but chips on its surface. The number and size kept constantly increasing, till the river seemed a gigantic glacier, impelled onward with a force terrific in its power. The full moon shone down with a pallid light on its glassy surface, and the white spectral hills loomed above it.

"Oh! isn't it magnificent!" exclaimed Julia. "I thought the snow landscape this morning couldn't be surpassed, but this exceeds anything I ever saw."

"It is very fine for us, standing safe above the

flood. But the water is rising every moment, and those on the lowlands may all be drowned before morning, if it gorges below here and backs up the water," said Hunt.

"Oh!" exclaimed Grace and Ada. "Is it possible that can happen?"

"We ought to give them warning, Frank; won't you or some one go and tell them of their danger?" cried Julia.

"They have eyes as well as ourselves," said Gordon.

"Yes, but they can't see the danger so well."

"Graham has gone, probably with that intent, Miss Julia, so you can rest easy," said Hunt.

"That's just like him," thought Julia. "But I don't believe these two men would lift a finger unless their own necks were in danger."

She knew that if any help were wanted, Maurice Graham would not stand aloof. Their night watch together had made her feel that he was no longer a stranger, and by this time she had formed a pretty true estimate of his character. For some reason she did not feel as easy as she might in the knowledge that he had gone to do his duty, if others failed.

Her simple enjoyment of the grandeur of the scene was now merged in apprehension of its fearfully destructive power, for the huge boulders of ice were grinding against the abutments of the

carriage bridge, over which she had been driven in such mad speed, but a few days before.

"Do you think it will stand?" she asked Hunt, as they looked down from the farthest edge of the cliff on the seething mass below.

"Oh Julia! come away. You will lose your balance and fall," cried Grace.

"I won't let her," said Hunt. "Who knows whether the evening train has passed the other bridge yet?"

Frank Gordon took out his watch, and saw by the moonlight that its time was not due.

At that instant a loud crash was heard. The carriage bridge had given way, and was crushed into fragments, and its large beams tossed up in air, pressed forward like gigantic levers against the bridge beyond.

"Look!" cried Julia. "There comes a train. Oh! will no one stop them? They can't get over in time."

All watched with breathless anxiety, first the ice torrent, then the fast-coming train. It was a fearful race between steam and water, which would win, it seemed impossible to tell. But in a few moments that were like hours, the train reached the bridge and dashed across, while the ice was rearing up like a tremendous avalanche to fall upon it. Scarcely had it passed, when a man, holding a red lantern, rushed upon the bridge, to

give warning to the passenger-train following close behind the one that had just crossed.

Hundreds of eyes from the surrounding banks were by this time following his effort. Julia and Hunt heard voices call out below them, "That's Graham, going to certain destruction."

As they caught the words, the second crash came, and a span of the bridge he had just passed fell, and swung out into the stream. Would the rest hold till the bank was reached? In agonized suspense they watched, for off in the distance they saw the long passenger-train, winding round the curves of the hills. The rest of the bridge seemed to tremble and totter under the blows of the jagged ice-blocks. But a joyous shout rang through the air, as Graham bounded to firm land, even above the roar of the grinding ice, which lifted the bridge and bore it bodily away. They cared little for that now. All interest centered in Graham's power to arrest the coming train.

Julia was scarcely conscious that it was Hunt's arm that held her firm in her advanced position. It was the man speeding forward, waving on high the red signal of danger, on whom all her thoughts were concentrated; for a hundred lives hung on his speed.

On and on the engine came. Its great fiery eye now hid behind some sharp curve, now rounding the hills still nearer the point of danger. It

seemed as if Graham's strength was failing and that they would never see his light. At length, however, he sprang high upon a rock above the last curve, waving his red lantern to and fro over the track.


"Oh! there comes the engine! Will they never see him?" cried Julia, wringing her hands in an agony of fear.

"My God! they are yet under full speed. Will nothing stop them?" exclaimed Hunt, even his cold nature wrought up to intense excitement. "There's only the curve where he stands. Unless he hails them there, they go on to certain destruction."

The light of the engine again disappears. All hold their breath in horror for the next gleam; but ere it comes the whistle sounds, "*Down breaks!*" and gradually the long train moves more and more slowly, till it stands motionless at the very brink of the river.

CHAPTER XI.

A SCENE OF DESOLATION.

HE next morning when they gathered for breakfast, Julia glowing with enthusiasm met Maurice Graham, and holding out her hand, exclaimed, "Mr. Graham, you are a perfect hero. Allow me to congratulate you on your wonderful achievement last night."

"Yes, Graham, that was a brave deed. I thought we would never see you again," said Hunt, as they all pressed round him with tributes to his courage and presence of mind.

"My long legs really did me some service," replied Graham. "They used to win me many a race when a school-boy. But I never tried one with an ice-gorge before."

"Yet you won that too," said Julia. "We'll have unlimited faith in your powers, henceforth."

"Locomotive powers?" asked Graham, smiling.

"Yes; and in the heart and brain that guided them," she replied in a low, quiet tone, as they were taking their seats. Graham felt a thrill of

pleasure; for he saw that her words were not flattery; but that she was more truly in sympathy with him than any in that circle. He thought, "If she could only learn the glory of self-sacrifice, as Christ lived and taught it, what a noble life-work, with her character and position, she might accomplish!"

"What is the prospect now?" asked Grace as she poured out the fragrant coffee. "Has most of the ice gone down?"

"No, the worst is to come yet," said Gordon, gloomily. "A man from up the river told our coachman this morning that it is jammed with ice for twenty miles above us. There are such masses accumulated that they have literally driven the water out, and in many places rest upon the river bed. There is a tremendous gorge twenty feet high a mile above us, and another a few miles below. If it gets started again as it did last night, there's no telling what will be the result; a great destruction of property must follow. I'm thankful we are so high up."

"There have been terrible floods above us; some poor families have lost everything they had," said Graham.

"Can nothing be done for them?" asked Grace.

"There ought to be a purse made up at once. I'll contribute. Won't you, Mr. Hunt?" asked Julia.

"Our charities may be needed nearer home," said Hunt. "I am anxious about our own village. It lies so much in the ravine between the mountains."

"Yes," said Gordon, "if a jam occurs below and sets the water back, there will be great danger both for the village and our mines. Graham, we must secure an extra force and make every effort to turn off the water."

"I'll do the best I can," he replied. "I warned the miners of their danger and urged them to move their effects to those empty cottages on the mountain. We are not the only people in trouble. There are some handsome places on the banks a little lower down very much exposed."

"Is there any danger that Mr. Butler's beautiful house will be injured?" asked Ada.

"If there should come a warm rain, they stand a great chance of floating off on an ice-cake," said Hunt.

"Frank, we ought to invite them here. I will write Mrs. Butler a note for you to leave there this morning," said Grace.

"How can we get to town to-day?" asked Gordon.

"There is a carriage bridge above still standing," said Graham: "It is so cold that there is little danger that the gorges will move at present. Indeed they are freezing into a solid mass. I went

up to look at those above us this morning, and I never expect to see a grander sight, with their beauty and terrible power to injure and destroy."

"What are they like?" asked Julia.

"Did you ever see the whirlpool rapids at Niagara, just after sunrise?" said Graham.

"Never so early. Why do you ask?"

"Because the immense glaciers which have usurped the river as far as one can see, looked to me just as if those rapids had been instantly congealed. The dark stained masses below, with clear sparkling points jutting up, were capped by the white foam-like snow. And the slanting sunbeams broken into rainbow tints, played hide and seek among the sides and jagged edges of the ice blocks and caverns, as I have often watched them over the restless surface of those rapids."

"Oh! let us go and see them this morning," said Julia.

"I'll not go," said Ada. "Last night was enough for me; I don't enjoy such icy views."

"Grace and I are ready for it. When can we start?" asked Julia.

"I think I could go with you about noon," replied Graham. "The best view is from one of the hills above."

"Ada, I can't consent to your going," said old Mrs. Gordon. "I had a very bad night. These

excitements are too much for my nerves. I do wish we could have a little peace and quiet."

"That's just what I was seeking ; rural seclusion after my trip. Do you generally get up such a series of adventures for your guests, Frank?" asked Julia.

"I should hope not. But you seem to have a happy tact for getting into them."

"Oh ! I always like to be in the midst of everything and know what is going on."

"If that is your ambition, the center of one of those ice gorges, when they start, would be a good position," said Ada.

At twelve o'clock they started. The sun shone clearly, but a sharp north wind prevented its making any impression on the ice or snow-clad mountains. As they passed below Cedar Ridge they saw that the river had fallen, and that large cakes were slowly floating on its surface, while a number of men with picks and shovels had just forced a way through the rough, shapeless ice-blocks which had been piled upon the road. Graham soon turned up from the river a short distance toward the mountains, and suddenly came out upon a hill overlooking the valley. There, save where it was hidden by a few slight curves, they saw the awful barricade stretching for miles up the river. Some of the blocks were four and five feet through, solid and clear as crystal, and, massed one upon another,

the play of light from their icy prisms was perfectly dazzling.

They looked in silence for some time, then Grace said :

“ Julia, what are you thinking about ? You have such a horrified expression on your face.”

“ I remembered the report,” she replied, “ that it was feared some might have been carried away by the flood, and thinking of it recalled that illustration by Doré of Dante’s ‘ *Inferno* ;’ where in the last and ninth circle, those who had betrayed their benefactors were doomed to perpetual burial beneath the ice, ‘ where the souls were all whelm’d underneath, transparent, as through glass.’ And Lucifer, ‘ that emperor who sways the realm of sorrow, at mid-breast from the ice stood forth.’ ”

“ O Julia, how can you recall such horrible things ! It has spoiled the beauty of this scene for me. Mr. Graham, I hope your reflections are more cheerful.”

“ I was thinking of a grander description.”

“ What can be more so than Dante’s ‘ *Inferno* ?’ ” asked Julia.

“ God’s voice answering Job out of the whirlwind : ‘ Hast thou entered into the treasures of snow : or hast thou seen the treasures of hail ? Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war. Out of whose womb came the ice ; and the hoary frost, who hath

gendered it? The waters are hid as with a stone and the face of the deep is frozen.' ”

For a time no one spoke, then Julia said in a low voice, “ Mr. Graham, one of those verses says, ‘ Which I have reserved against the time of trouble.’ Do you think this was sent as a special judgment? ”

“ I don’t know that it is; any further than that God means us to take warning by such fearful providences. Christ told his disciples not to think that those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were greater sinners than others; but adds also the warning, ‘ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.’ ”

“ O Mr. Graham, I can’t look at this any longer,” said Grace. “ I feel as if it were freezing me. Do let us go home.”

They turned and rode back a silent party. Days passed by, and the position of the ice gorges remained much the same. Gloom and apprehension filled the minds of the inhabitants dwelling near the river, except those who became heedless of the danger, from its long delay.

When Easter Sunday found the ice still firm, the family at Cedar Ridge agreed that there was too much exposure in attempting to attend their own church. So Hunt proposed reading aloud to the ladies to while away the long morning. He knew that Ada would be obliged to give part of her time

to his mother, and that the nursery would prove most attractive to Grace ; thus he hoped to secure a chance to press his suit with Julia. He saw that she avoided being left alone with him, yet watched all his actions with the closest scrutiny. He believed that Sam Walker had said something to arouse her suspicions. But he hoped that day to secure her confidence, and again his old influence.

Julia suspected his motives, and was not at all inclined to gratify him. Therefore, when the rest seated themselves as listeners, she asked to be excused for a time, and saying that she might be detained, requested them to continue without her. She then slipped on her wraps, and stole quietly out for a lonely walk. She was feeling very unhappy and, therefore, irritable and restless. She had come there a thoughtless girl, resolved on having a gay time, but everything had resulted so differently from her bright anticipations, and one alarming event had followed so fast upon another, that she could find no rest or security anywhere. Conscience was thoroughly aroused, but her will also rose in fierce rebellion against God, whom she accused of being cruel and vindictive, sending his judgments more upon the innocent than the guilty.

In a reckless mood, she walked down to the foot of the lawn, to look at the river. As she neared the arbor she saw Graham sitting there, gazing

with anxious face at the ice above them. She was about to turn away, when he heard her step and said: "Please come nearer, Miss Earle, and tell me what you think of the prospect?"

"I do not see that the danger is removed. The gorges are still there."

"What troubles me is that many of the miners, thinking, from the long delay, that danger is over, have returned to their homes, and when the flood comes, all may be swept away."

"Mr. Graham, I have been thinking that the old heathen idea of a blind justice in the management of this world, seems the most correct one. Her blows fall upon those who happen to be under them. Who have been, and are most likely to be the chief sufferers here, but poor families, and innocent women and children?"

"Miss Julia, there are mysteries in God's providence I cannot hope to fathom."

"I don't believe in a religion I cannot understand!" replied Julia, impatiently.

"Can you or I grasp the problem by which the astronomer measures the journey of light from those stars, which they tell us are so remote that they may have been blotted from the universe, yet their rays are still traveling toward us? How, then, can we hope to comprehend God's infinite knowledge? The ancient Greeks believed in three old blind women spinning off the years from their

fated distaffs. 'Stern Clotho wove the checkered thread, Lachesis turned the spindle, and Atropos cut the fatal strand.'

'Hour after hour, the growing line extends ;
The cradle and the coffin bound its ends.'

That was their solution of your query."

"What is yours?" asked Julia, eagerly.

"Do you remember the description in Ezekiel of the Cherubim, with their wheels within wheels; their rings full of eyes, and four living creatures guiding them, while above all was the sapphire throne, and the appearance of a man upon it, as the likeness of the glory of the Lord?"

"No, I don't remember to have read it, nor do I see what it means."

"I was studying that chapter this morning, and it seemed to me one of God's half revealed problems, that would answer your question, could we fully solve it."

"Well, explain it, please."

"I don't know that I can; but as I have been thinking it over, those wheels seem the circling years; not spun off in a dizzy whirl without aim or guidance, but full of eyes denoting God's clear insight, and guided by four living creatures, possibly the great archangels, who stand nearest his throne; while the glorious Lord, revealed in the appearance of a man, directs and controls all."

"Why do you lay such emphasis on the appearance of a man?"

"Because the description shows God's infinite power, yet that he suffers his glory to be eclipsed in the likeness of a man, who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. This would seem to teach that as the Redeemer, he does not limit our existence from the cradle to the coffin, but lifts us up to a life immortal, and because he lives, though he wears our nature, we shall live also."

"You say He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Yet think of the noble people—the real Christians you know, and see what burdened, oppressed lives the majority lead."

"I know; yet what makes the brave, victorious soldier but stern discipline, by which he learns to conquer difficulties? So must the soldier of the Cross learn to endure hardness. He will find, the hotter the battle, the greater the victory. Are you afraid to join that army, Miss Julia?"

"I own I don't want this discipline."

"It may come whether you want it or not. But I must go," said Graham rising.

"Where are you going?"

"To our little Sunday-school at Ned Malcome's cottage."

"Oh! will you take me with you? I should like to see his blind mother. Bessie Walker told me about her."

"I shall be happy to have you go. But it is a mile away."

"All the better; I will enjoy the walk in this bracing air."

Graham called to a servant, who was passing near, and directed him to tell Mrs. Gordon that Miss Earle was going with him to attend the school on the mountain.

Then they followed a narrow winding path through clumps of evergreens, till it emerged at the large entrance gate, when Julia said, "Mr. Graham, I have been wondering that you are not a clergyman."

"Why? Because I gave you such a long sermon this morning?"

"No; one expects that on Sunday, and I suggested your theme. But haven't you mistaken your calling?"

An expression of pain passed over his face, as he stood for a moment, looking down on the colliery buildings below them. Then meeting her eyes fixed earnestly upon him, as if she were trying to read his thoughts, he said with a smile, "It was the dream of my boyhood, Miss Julia, to be a minister. I used often to fancy my little ivy-mantled church, with its 'dim religious light,' falling through stained glass,

'Where were angels and saints and martyrs
Seen in its pictured panes.'

Those were the visions of my youthful days. Down there is the reality," he added, pointing toward the ungraceful lines of the black coal-breaker.

"It is a great contrast," said Julia in a musing tone, "but only the way things practically work in this world. The black diamonds outweigh the saint's crown."

"Don't misunderstand me," she added quickly, as she met Graham's indignant glance. "I did not mean that for you. I am sure your motives for change were right and noble. The whole testimony of your character compels me to believe it."

"I am glad if you can say so," he answered quietly. "My father's death made it necessary for me, the eldest son, to choose another occupation. But I believe earnest Christians are needed in every walk of life, and if I can do my duty where I am, the field will be large enough."

"Indeed, I am inclined to think you will accomplish more. It is very unusual to find a young man, not a clergyman, who carries his religion into every-day life."

"It is a hard test to live in the world, yet keep one's self unspotted from its stain, Miss Julia; I know I have often failed."

"Mr. Hunt says that every man has his price, if you only bid high enough, or offer the right bribe."

"He might have quoted Judas and Arnold as notable proofs of his argument. I acknowledge

that the world is not yet rid of hypocrites and traitors. But I should feel very sorry if I didn't know some whose truth and integrity could never be bought."

"I think I know some, too. But to change the subject slightly, have you any acquaintance with that Mr. Stokes, who has been visiting Cedar Ridge so often lately?"

"No more than you have, Miss Julia. I do not like his appearance, but I know nothing against him."

"Sam Walker said so much to his discredit, that I am afraid he may involve Frank and Mr. Hunt in trouble, as he seems so mixed up with their business. I don't know that I ought to talk to you about my fears, but I have no one else to consult. Grace don't think there is any cause for alarm."

"He has nothing to do with things in which I am concerned. But, as you know, Mr. Hunt is engaged in many outside operations. I cannot vouch for his actions." And after a slight pause, he continued with considerable hesitancy, "Will you forgive me, Miss Earle, for speaking so frankly, if I warn you against allowing yourself to feel any strong interest in Mr. Hunt, till you are sure that his character and motives are such as you can fully trust? At present, I can give no reason for my doubts, yet they are very strong."

Julia was amused with the similarity of their suspicions, and looked up with a comic glance, that brought a deep blush to her companion's face. Hers caught a reflection of it, and turning away she thanked him in a low, embarrassed voice. Both felt that they had spoken impulsively and might have misunderstood the other; and so it was a relief when they saw the cottage close at hand.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCHOOL ON THE MOUNTAIN.



GRAHAM was curious, and a little anxious, as to the manner in which Julia would meet those to whom he was about to introduce her. He had often been annoyed by her rudeness to old Mrs. Gordon and Ada, and he felt that any superciliousness manifested to the Malcomes would cause him great mortification; for, although in humble circumstances, they were not lacking in true refinement.

But Ned Malcome met them at the door with an expression of glad surprise, and, giving Julia a warm greeting, he led her up to his mother and sister. Graham stood, like the children, charmed by her frank, winning manner, and thought to himself, "She is a perfect chameleon, both in looks and actions; one never knows what to expect."

"Mither," said Ned, as Julia knelt down on a little bench by the old woman's side, "Here's Miss Earle, the young leddy who saved my life from the raiders, and watched all the long nicht wi' puir Mrs. Malone. An' there's mony anither guid deed she's done, of which she's biddin' me not to be

tellin' ye, ' he added with a laugh, as Julia earnestly begged him to stop.

"God bless ye, my leddy. He kens them a'. But ye'll not despise the thanks of a puir auld mither, who would hae been in sair distres wi'out her bairn."

"Alas! Mrs. Malcome," replied Julia, with eyes full of tears; "it is so little I deserve. The good deeds are very few; the thoughtless, selfish ones so many."

"Ah! lassie, that's jist the w'y o' us all. Your voice sounds as sweet as the first birdies in spring. Will ye lat me see ye as the blind only can?"

Julia took the thin, trembling fingers in her soft white hand, and guided them slowly over her face, saying, "You see I am not a bonnie bird, only wee brown Jennie Wren chirping at your feet."

"Weel, weel, ye'r a blithe little birdie, an' ye maun lat me hear ye often."

Julia was then given a chair near the stove, while Graham called the school to order. After a little, as she listened to the opening hymn, their voices seemed gradually to die away. She thought that she had fallen asleep in church, and was dreaming about those people, and that she must make an effort to wake up or she would surely fall. Then came a blank till she opened her eyes in a strange room where she was lying on a couch, with cool

air blowing upon her, and Maurice Graham in deep anxiety bending over her, bathing her face.

Starting up she exclaimed, "What has happened? I haven't done such a foolish thing as to faint, I hope?"

Graham looked greatly relieved, as he smilingly replied. "The evidence is very much against you, Miss Julia; but do you feel better? I cannot forgive myself for allowing you to take such a long cold walk."

"Really, Mr. Graham, I never did such a thing before. I suppose it was the cold; then coming so suddenly into that warm room. But I will be all right in a few minutes."

"Will you rest quietly here till school is over? I will send for the cutter and can then take you home."

"Oh! I prefer to walk. I wouldn't have them know of this at Cedar Ridge for anything. It will frighten Grace, and she would not let me go among these cottages again, you see."

"I understand; they will learn nothing from me. Can't you trust me, Miss Julia?"

Julia's eyes fell before the earnest ones bent upon her, for there was more in their expression than their owner knew. But lifting her own again suddenly as she heard a footstep, she caught a glimpse of Annie Malcome standing gazing at Graham with surprise and jealousy painfully depicted on her

pale face. It was only for a moment and then she came forward with a warm drink, and gentle offers of assistance. Julia took the cup, and, thanking her said that the faintness had passed but her head felt a little unsteady yet. She would remain there and try to give no further trouble, if all would return to their duties as usual.

So, after shutting the window and throwing a shawl over her feet, Graham and Annie withdrew to their classes. Julia lay very still listening to the murmur of voices which sometimes swelled into a hymn, while through her busy brain a crowd of thoughts mingled and often painfully jostled each other.

It was a relief when she heard the ringing of sleigh-bells at the door and the trampling of little feet, announcing that school was over. She hastily put on her wraps and went to the window. There, to her surprise, she saw Mr. Butler seated in his sleigh.

Mention has been made of this gentleman before, but now he shall be presented with a fuller introduction. He represented one of the best families of that region.

His father had been an early settler, who patiently toiled on his large farm, before they discovered the richer harvest that lay below the soil. In the increased value of his lands he had obtained his wealth, but to a noble nature, trained and devel-

oped by high culture and travel, he owed still more the position he held in the respect and love of the community. He was now an elderly gentleman, of generous proportions, both in height and breadth; with gray hair and side whiskers, which revealed his firm mouth and square chin, made kindly in expression by the large blue eyes that either twinkled with mirth, or glowed with feeling. His manner was dignified, but genial; and while ignoring the simplicity of his early life, he was an acknowledged leader in all modern improvements and moral reforms.

He had become acquainted with Graham soon after his arrival at Cedar Ridge, and quickly took the gauge of his character. A warm friendship was now existing between them, and that morning he had come seeking Graham's aid to address the Sunday-school of the leading church in town, of which he was the main pillar. He had called at Cedar Ridge, and there learned from Grace that he would find Julia with Graham. He was very glad to hear that, for her bright piquant ways amused him, while the knowledge of her conduct at the miners' raid won his admiration.

"So! ho! Miss Julia," he exclaimed, as he gave her hand a hearty shake; "Graham has pressed you too into the good work."

"Oh no; I was only a visitor, and a troublesome one at that."

“ I think I can answer for his bearing the trouble. What did you do ? Flirt with the boys ? But come, take a seat with me. Graham, you'll have to sit opposite ; but you will have the advantage of looking—at me, while we talk. Good-bye, Miss Annie, I am coming to see the mother, when I've more time. Malcome, I am glad to hear that they can't frighten you from your post.”

Then giving word to his coachman, the spirited horses sprang away, tossing light snow-balls right and left as they sped down the hill. Annie stood looking after them with shaded eyes, and did not notice a young man who just then drove up in a light cutter, till he said, in a hesitating voice :

“ Miss Malcome, will you go with me to Ashville this afternoon ? There is to be a special service at the church there.”

She turned aside her head, but not quickly enough to hide the tearful eyes, as she said, “ No, Andrew ; but I thank you for the kindness ;” then added hastily, “ I'll tell Ned that you are here ; good-bye,” and flew past him into the house.

“ It's not kindness, as she well knows. Has that saintly superintendent been trifling with her ? By George ! I wish I knew—or what it is stands in my way. But I didn't come here to see Ned,” he muttered, and with a very gloomy brow the young man also drove away.

As Mr. Butler and his party left the cottage, he explained to Graham the object for which he sought him. He then turned to Julia and said, "I am inclined to think we will need you too. Mrs. Butler is feeling rather worn from confinement to the house by the long continued cold. Will you come and stay with us for a little? Your cheery company is all she needs. I think also that you will enjoy our Easter festival; it is a very pretty service, as each class brings some floral design with their mission offerings."

"I should like to go exceedingly. But I don't know what Grace will say to my running away again."

"Oh, I have arranged all that, and promised to bring you back, and my wife also, as soon as there is the least indication of thaw; although I do not apprehend any danger, when the ice does move; we are so much higher than the bank. Can you exist till to-morrow without your trunk, or shall we return to Cedar Ridge now?"

"I am inclined to think both you and Mr. Graham will appreciate a comfortable dinner before services, more than any fine toilets, so I'll not detain you."

"What a sensible girl she is!" said the old gentleman, with a merry twinkle in his eyes. "She knows our weak point, Graham. Take the road through Ashville, Jim. It will save time and I will

show you where I used to live when a boy, Miss Julia."

They soon passed through a straggling village, of very small shabby houses, that looked as if the tide of progress had been turned aside and left them stranded, so little life or activity was visible. A short distance beyond was an old farm-house that appeared still more run down and forsaken. As they came in front of the gate, they saw several bright, healthy, but poorly-clad children, standing around an old, faded woman.

Ordering his horses to pause a moment, he lifted his hat and called in his cheery voice, "I am glad to see you well enough to be out, Mrs. Fuller. How's the invalid?"

The woman's pale face flushed slightly as she answered, "A little more comfortable to-day, sir."

"Ah, that's hopeful. I see the grand-babies are all hearty."

"You could hardly imagine, Miss Julia," he continued as they rode on, "what a pretty lassie that woman was. I was desperately in love with her before I was out of my teens. But I was only a youngster, and she chose Fuller. It was considered a very good match then. But somehow things have never prospered with them. There wasn't any coal found on their land, and indeed they did not own much besides the mill. The oldest daughter married unfortunately, and has

now come home with her children, a helpless invalid. I would like to do something for them, for the sake of 'auld lang syne,' but Fuller is such a proud, reserved man, that it is very difficult to approach him with any such intent. Have you heard anything about him lately, Graham?"

"Only that his place is heavily mortgaged, and that his son Andrew has been trying to get work as engineer at the Rosedale colliery. I offered him a good position at ours before the strike, but he refused."

"Ah well, what changes time makes!" said the old man with a sigh, as he thought of his only boy, lying wrapped in his country's flag, in the lonely cemetery. "Miss Julia," he added after a pause, "do you see that old grist-mill, with its big wheel half gone? Many a time when a boy I've ridden down there with a bag of grain for my saddle. About a mile up that creek was my old home. Father had a large farm and a big old-fashioned house, with the latch-string always outside the door. And the farmers from the next county generally used to stop and rest there, on their way to Fuller's mill. John Fuller's father did a large business then. Traveling wasn't always very safe among these mountains, when one was suspected of carrying a little extra money. I can tell you, Graham, we saw some pretty lively times. When I look back to that past, it seems

hardly possible that seventy years should have brought such changes."

Not among the least of these was the elegant mansion on the banks of the river, where their horses soon brought them.

Mrs. Butler met them at the door with a cordial welcome. She was small and slight, with a gentle, refined face, shaded by soft gray curls. It needed but a glance to detect the tender love and true sympathy that existed between them, as Mr. Butler pressed a kiss on his wife's delicate cheek and said in his hearty way, "Well, 'Old Times,' I am back again, and brought some youngsters to cheer you up. Will dinner be ready soon? I call my wife 'Old Times,' Graham, because she is like good wine, more mellow and precious for the keeping."

"Now Jo, don't be foolish. Maurice knows what to expect from you, but what will Miss Julia think?"

"I warrant you she's wondering if some old fellow will be saying such sweet things to her, when those brown curls turn to silver."

"Indeed, Mr. Butler, you couldn't have made a better guess," replied Julia, while her dancing eyes and flushed cheeks tempted both gentlemen to commence at once. But shaking his finger at her, Mr. Butler said, "I'm afraid you are surfeited with those sweets already, and will be spoiled."

"Turn sour do you think? No, no, Mr. Butler, you must allow for a little fermentation first," called Julia laughingly as she ran up-stairs to smooth her hair."

"She's right there, Graham. I believe she too will improve with the keeping. I'll give you both my blessing,"

"Thank you, it's a good thing to have, but I fancy you will need to bestow it separately."

"Well, well, we'll see; but dinner comes first."

When Julia entered the Church of St. Thomas, that afternoon, it seemed to her almost a perfect realization of Graham's early day-dreams. It was the children's Easter festival, and as they occupied the body of the church, she was not sorry to find a little nook behind one of the large pillars, where she could, with a little movement, command a view of the whole building.. The font was filled with pure white lilies, whose long petals swayed like golden censers, breathing sweet perfume.

At first, the organ's deep tones rolled out in grand, swelling chords, then changed to soft rippling notes, on which children's voices rose in their Easter anthem, ringing with as joyous a burst of melody as the loud hosannas by which other children, eighteen hundred years ago, welcomed their Messiah.

Julia wondered greatly, not without certain nervous apprehensions, how Graham would appear

before that large audience. But he stepped in front of the chancel with as much quiet self-possession as when he addressed his little school on the mountain; only his voice was raised so that its full, deep tones reached every ear. It was evident that his thoughts were wholly engrossed with the subject he had to present.

Briefly, but graphically, he touched on the great self-sacrifice of Christ, and its triumphant achievement which that day commemorated. Then he gave noble instances of those who had walked closest in their Master's footsteps, devoting their lives also to the welfare of others; and he showed how much greater was the honor accorded them in this world—if not in their own generation, yet in the ages that followed—than those who sought only unworthy ambition or selfish pleasure. And then, in a few strong sentences, he pictured the higher reward awaiting them when God's records should be revealed.

Perhaps, as he held the attention of young and old, he alone had forgotten a more recent instance of how a young man rushed across a tottering bridge, in the face of almost certain death, to save the lives of a hundred strangers. The living example unconsciously gave more power to his argument than all the examples of the past.

As Julia bowed her head, in the closing prayer, her heart also was bowed with shame, as she thought

to how little purpose her life had been spent hitherto.

When they gathered in Mr. Butler's cosy parlor after tea, the old gentleman walked to the piano, and opening it said: "Come, Graham, now you must sing for us; Miss Julia will accompany you, while wife and I play 'Darby and Joan,' in the chimney corner. Please begin with 'Don't be Sorrowful, Darling;' that's her favorite. I know Miss Julia will help you in the chorus."

"I'll do my best on the alto; but I'm not a skilled musician, like Miss Ada. I may be no help," said Julia.

"Pshaw! I don't want any operatic flourishes. Give us something from the heart, no matter about the understanding," said the old man, impatiently.

But it was proved that they possessed considerable understanding, though perhaps not of the highest order. They chose their favorites, first one, then the other, till Julia and Graham became so interested in harmonizing their voices in the various hymns, that they did not notice the silence of their audience, till, pausing to ask a question, they saw that the old couple had fallen asleep, with their hands clasped and faces turned toward each other in a smile of perfect content.

"Isn't that a pretty tableau?" said Julia, as her eyes met Graham's, and then, for some unaccount-

able reason, sought the floor, while a deeper color dyed her cheeks, as he replied :

" Yes, those two come the nearest to my idea of what God meant by the marriage tie when he placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden."

Then as Julia made no response, he said, " I won't disturb them to say good-night. I ought not to keep the coachman up later. Good-bye," he added, taking her hand. " It will seem lonely at Cedar Ridge without you."

" What ! with Miss Ada there ?" she asked, with a rallying smile ; but was sorry she had spoken, when she saw his pained, embarrassed expression, as he turned and left her. She went to the window and watched him drive away ; then sat down quietly on the other side of the hearth, where she fell into a long reverie.

As Graham rode home, he thought to himself, " Is it possible she believes that I still care for Miss Ada ? What a fool I was to be so bewitched by her false arts. But it was really an ideal character I loved. As I know her now, all her beauty cannot charm me."

Then his thoughts reverted to the scene he had just left, and recalling his first impressions of Julia, he accused himself of having been very harsh and unjust in his judgment. And as he went over the incidents of the pleasant day they had passed together, he thought she had never

appeared to greater advantage, and rejoiced in the good influences which were now surrounding her, developing all that was noblest in her character. Had any one suggested that he was becoming too strongly interested in that development for his own safety, he would have scouted the idea. It was only the love of benevolence. Anything more personal with him was a thing of the past. So he took pleasure in devising plans by which he might help her up still higher. He little imagined as he saw a faint light gleaming from Ned Malcome's cottage, that Annie was kneeling by her bed, in an agony of prayer, for strength to overcome a love for him that she acknowledged in bitter humiliation had come to her unsolicited.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WOLF AT THE DOOR.

HUNT entered the private office of the Oquago Bank on Monday morning in no good humor. Julia's conduct the day before had annoyed and perplexed him. He was not a man to be thwarted, and the more opposition he received, the more determined he became to gain his point. If Julia had been particularly anxious to win him, she could not have taken a surer method than the uncertainty with which her manner impressed him. He was also vexed that she should have gone to Mr. Butler's at that time, and especially with Graham. He had hardly a thought of serious rivalry there. He had indeed discovered that Ada could no longer charm Graham, and he did not doubt that the heiress's wealth would prove equally attractive to the poor young man. Yet he did not believe Julia could make such a foolish choice, when he stood in front of his mirror and compared Graham's plain appearance with his elegant proportions.

Business, however, claimed attention, and he

laid aside these thoughts as he took up his pile of morning letters. The first he opened was from a firm in Western New York, who had written to him several weeks before, making inquiries as to whether there was a good site with water privileges, for a planing-mill in that vicinity. He had replied, that he knew of a place he thought would suit them, and briefly stated its facilities and price; but urged them to wait till spring fairly opened, and the ice was removed, before coming to inspect the property. The letter he now held informed him that one of the partners would be there by the first of May, ready to pay cash down, should everything prove satisfactory.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "I'll make it satisfactory. But I've got to move promptly now. It's too good a chance to lose."

The next letter was not so pleasant. It was from Stokes, written at the Astor House, New York, saying, that their stock, from which they hoped so much, had taken a wrong turn. Wall Street was becoming suspicious, it was but a breath as yet, but unless Hunt could advance more funds to buoy them up, they would go down with a run, and all be lost.

Here was a serious difficulty. He had already put more into this venture than he could well afford, and had borrowed largely from Stokes and the bank, giving, through Gordon's signature, bonds

and mortgages of Grace's property as collateral. What should he do now? There was no time to lose. Delay might hazard everything. Funds must be obtained somehow from the bank. It would hurt his credit to go elsewhere. There were some mortgages that he could foreclose. Repeated warnings had been given, and he had resolved to take the necessary steps to secure the property. He might induce Gordon to give him more aid, rather than risk all now involved. He knew that it was a desperate game he was playing. Yet he believed that Stokes, though a very sharp, unscrupulous man, had so involved his own interests in its successful result, that he would bring to it even greater nerve and more of the tricks of the game than Hunt in his position would dare to venture.

After half an hour of deep and anxious thought, he went into the bank and asked the cashier to step to his room for a few moments; then securing the door, he showed him Stokes's letter, and said that he wanted an immediate loan of fifty thousand dollars, placing before him stocks that both knew were worthless, but asserting that he expected within a month to be able to fill those envelopes with first-class securities.

The cashier knew that the proceeding was dishonest. But he owed his position to Hunt, and he too had been persuaded to invest his savings in this venture. If Hunt lost, his all went with it.

He knew how important it was for Hunt to keep his credit unimpaired. The business community about them had implicit faith in it yet. The Directors had just held their meeting. Before there was another, Hunt assured him that the whole thing would be brought to a successful issue, and a clean record ready for inspection. The cashier had often seen Hunt run full greater risks, and come out victorious.

Rapidly these thoughts passed through his mind, and when Hunt asked if he were ready to fulfill his request, he signified his assent, and in an hour or two after Stokes received a dispatch, authorizing him to draw on a bank in New York for that amount.

This accomplished, Hunt breathed more easily, and sat down to write a long letter to Stokes, in regard to the management of the stocks. While thus engaged there came a tap at his door, and looking up he saw before him the man he had been expecting all the morning.

"Good-day, Mr. Fuller. I hope you are well," he said, with his usual suavity, as he handed his visitor a chair. But the old man did not accept the seat, or return the salutation. As he stood with his eyes bent on the floor, he looked with his spare, stooping form and haggard face, with the gray hair hanging round it, like one who had been fighting a desperate battle with misfortune, and now felt

himself utterly crushed and defeated. Hunt recognized the expression, and felt sure that the matter lay in his own hands.

"You received my note, Mr. Fuller," he said again in the same gentle tone.

The man's eyes flashed for a moment, as he replied, "Yes, sir; and I've brought you the interest money. I know it is over due, but even this has been raised by such sacrifices as you can never appreciate. Surely, Mr. Hunt, you will not press to desperation an old man, who is already down?"

"I think, Mr. Fuller, I have notified you several times before, that I needed the sum loaned you on bond and mortgage for two years. The time expired several months ago, and I see no nearer prospect of its payment. Now I am compelled to believe that there is no other way for me to secure my own, than to take possession of a property which is running down so fast that, if brought to a forced sale to-morrow, it wouldn't cover the face of the mortgage."

John Fuller knew that this was true, and cowed before the smooth metallic tones of the man who had him in his power. Hitherto, proud and taciturn, he had borne all the buffets of misfortune without a moan. But now he was overwhelmed with distress. Large tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks, and dropped on the marble floor, while his form swayed with emotion, as he pas-

sionately plead, for the home of his children, for the only shelter of his wife and helpless family; begging for only one more chance, a little longer delay till times were better. But the cold marble at his feet, and the desk against which he leaned, could not have been more unyielding and impassive than the face before him. In one of the drawers of that desk lay the mortgage which would give Hunt possession of a property for fifteen thousand dollars, that he expected within a month thereafter to sell for thirty. No, no; there was no room for compassion, for Hunt had sore need of the money.

So in tones that were colder and sharper than any used before, he said, "Mr. Fuller, you forget yourself. This is no place for driveling sentiment. You should have thought of the consequences to your family when you took the risk. Business is business, and must be conducted on business principles. By next week the necessary steps will be consummated and I shall expect you to vacate. You had received notice before, and have no reason to complain. My time is precious, good-day, sir."

Fuller drew himself up, and dashing aside the tears, shook his clinched fist at the elegant president as he hissed through his teeth, "May the curse of the widow and the fatherless rest upon you. And as you have driven me to despair, may

the fiends of misfortune and disaster pursue you to the same bitter end."

But, with a courteous bow and a mocking smile, Hunt held the door open, for his visitor to pass out; and as he shut it, muttered, "Does he hope to frighten such an old bird as I with such scarecrows? I wonder how Walker will take my summons to yield up his store. Probably his brother Sam will come to the rescue, with some of the Trade Union funds, and I'll get back a little they've been cheating me out of for the last few months."

Then Hunt fell to work, and rapidly dispatched the large mass of correspondence lying before him.

John Fuller went out into the crisp air like one who had received a blow, and was yet dizzy and bewildered from the fall. He wandered through the streets, not knowing whither, till he found himself out of town, on the banks of the river, close by the mansion of Mr. Butler, the Joe Butler of his boyhood. He stopped and sat down on a cake of ice thrown upon the bank, and said slowly to himself. "I believe that man could and would help me. I wronged him years ago, when I stepped in between him and the girl he loved. Poor Mary, she little dreamed what a bad choice she made then. I have shunned him ever since, and been angry and bitter to think he had all the good luck, and I—just one blow after another. But I believe he's a

good man. There's nowhere else to look for aid. For the sake of the poor woman and helpless babes I'll pocket my pride and beg him, even on my bended knees if need be, to rescue me from the clutches of that merciless wolf."

Then, springing up, he sought the house, ere his resolution should fail. When the servant answered his summons, he could hardly control his voice to ask if Mr. Butler was at home.

"No," replied the maid; "he went to New York this morning."

"How soon will he be back?"

"Probably not before Saturday; what name shall I say?"

"John Fuller. But it's no matter;" and, pale as death, he tottered down the steps. The girl thought at first that he was sick, then, noting his shabby dress and unsteady walk, concluded that he was a drunken man, coming to beg for money. She had never seen him before, and soon dismissed him from her thoughts.

"I might have known that there wasn't a chance. It's just my luck," he moaned to himself as he slowly moved off. "It's all up now; I've no hope left. The sooner I'm out of the way, the better. Andrew has got work at last; he'll take care of them somehow. He's a good boy, and he may have better luck elsewhere; but if you root up an old tree it must just die."

Then he walked by the side of the river, choked by the immense accumulation of ice, often black with the debris it had gathered in its course; and looked into deep chasms, overhung by huge glittering blocks which seemed just ready to crash down, and said to himself: "Poor, gentle river, you too have been defeated, chained, and driven out by the cold, relentless ice. Another summer's sun will give you strength to break free, but the old man's strength is gone; he would do well to creep into one of those dark caverns, and hide forever from the world's scorn. But no, he must see them all; kiss them all good-bye, and look on the old mill again. When the flood comes, the old mill will go, and the old man with it. Their end is near."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FLOODS ARE UPON US.



ARCH, which came in like a roaring lion, with its storms and bluster, was going out like a lamb, and on its last day a soft south wind scattered dark clouds over the sky, loaded with heavy April showers, bringing in their train the bright blossoms of May.

But to the inhabitants watching the beleaguered river, there came a fearful apprehension of the conflict that must precede that time, between the ice and pent-up waters. And as night closed down, for miles on each side of the river rang the cry: "The gorges are moving! The floods are upon us!"

Those whose houses were safe from danger rushed to the banks to watch the struggle; others, exposed to the flood, snatched whichever of their household goods they valued most, and fled to the hills for refuge. Wild excitement, consternation, and dread of what might come in the darkness, filled the minds of all. They felt that they must see their danger, and large bonfires were kindled

on either bank, which cast their lurid flames down on the black waters, or were reflected from glittering masses of ice, as they tossed and rocked on the swift current.

At the first alarm, Graham ran down to the miners' village to give the warning. Then remembering Mrs. Butler and Julia Earle's exposed position, with Mr. Butler still probably from home, he rushed back to the stable, and ordering the swiftest and most reliable horse to be saddled immediately, he hurried into the house, and told Grace his destination, assuring her that he would do all that was possible to help them. Then putting on a rubber suit, and fastening a lantern to the pommel of his saddle, he dashed away, hoping to reach the bridge before the gorges above struck it. This he succeeded in doing, but the crowd there urged him to go back, for the water, driven from its natural channel, was submerging the low lands on the other side to such a depth that he might be drowned.

These arguments were not calculated to detain him, and urging on his horse, he carefully threaded his way between blocks of ice, and plashed through the water that covered the road and fields all around him, his one prayer, to reach Mr. Butler's ere it was too late. So swift and deep was the current along the highway, that he was obliged to move with great caution, and made but slow pro-

gress. At last he saw the house, still safe, though like Noah's Ark, surrounded by water; while the lamps from its upper windows threw a long pathway of light across the stray river's restless surface.

As he drew near he gave a loud call. A window was instantly raised, and Julia's voice returned him a glad welcome. He found the water around the dwelling not yet very deep. Julia told him it had filled the cellar, and risen two feet above the first floor. They had removed all that was valuable higher up, and as the foundations were strong, and the land fell off all around them, she did not think that there was much danger. But Mrs. Butler was greatly alarmed. It would be such a comfort to have him with them.

He replied that as soon as he could take care of his horse, he would be there, not to leave them till all risk was past. Julia held a lamp to light his way, and watched with intense interest his progress to and from the barn. Once she gave a cry of alarm, as, coming back on foot, in his effort to dodge a boulder of ice, he almost lost his balance as he stepped into the gutter of the roadway, through which the tide ran deep and rapid. He was young and vigorous, however, with a strong incentive to exertion before him, and in a few minutes he stood on the steps of the piazza. But he told Julia that it would not be safe to open the

door, and began climbing one of the pillars, hand over hand, to the balcony window, where she and her friend stood.

When he reached a firm footing, Mrs. Butler grasped both of his hands, as she said in a trembling voice :

“ God bless you for coming. I feared we would be left to perish alone.”

“ Dear Mrs. Butler, I do not think there is greater danger to be apprehended than a siege till the waters subside. I have examined outside the house as carefully as I could—riding around it. Now if you will give me a lamp, I will see how things are below, and what we can do to keep out the ice.”

“ Julia has had everything she could barricaded and strengthened. She has been so brave and helpful ; I don’t know what I should have done, but for her.”

“ The lieutenant must do his duty, till the captain comes. Now I am thankful to resign responsibility, and glad to sit down with a relieved mind,” said Julia, sinking into an easy chair, like one who found its rest very pleasant.

“ I know by this time what to expect from Miss Julia,” replied Graham, looking down on her with a bright, almost caressing smile. “ If I am captain, you must obey orders and remain there, and go to sleep. Mrs. Butler, you too had better lie

down just as you are. I will give you warning if new dangers arise."

"Oh! after you have been around, come back and make your report," said Julia.

"Yes, Mr. Graham, please stay with us, we are too anxious to sleep."

After promising to return, he made a careful inspection of the whole house, and secured with the man-servant's help, articles still left that might be injured, from all danger, if the water did not rise above the first-floor. This he did not apprehend unless the flood increased greatly as the gorges came down.

While he was working below-stairs, Julia also was busy, directing the maids to kindle a bright fire in the grate, and helping to spread the table with a substantial lunch. When at last Graham laid aside his waterproof garments, and in his usual home dress presented himself before the ladies, a delicious aroma of hot coffee met him on the threshold.

"Really this is charming!" he exclaimed, as he came up in front of the glowing hearth. "I could hardly hope for such a happy termination to my trip, when I crossed the bridge and saw a vast sheet of water turned from its course and rushing wildly over the country. I thought then how it must have seemed in the days of Noah, when the flood came, and covered the face of the earth."

"Do you think our ark will carry us safely through?" asked Mrs. Butler, with a slight tremble yet in her voice.

"Yes, Mrs. Butler, I am almost sure you have seen the worst. But I will keep a close watch. And Jim, your coachman, is now on the stairs to see whether the waters rise or fall. He will give us warning if there's cause for alarm. Miss Julia, I don't believe the cup that Hebe offered Jupiter was more delicious than this coffee."

"I think Julia does make a nice little Hebe. Her cheeks are so rosy to night," said Mrs. Butler, patting them softly, as she looked with a mischievous smile from her to Graham.

The color rose still brighter, as Julia met Graham's admiring eyes; but, with a roguish expression that was perfectly bewitching, she sprang up, and, seizing a plate of cold chicken, made him a profound bow, as she said, "I profess to be but mortal. Therefore am not sure how I should address his majesty. But will the great and mighty Jupiter accept a drumstick or a wing?"

"Miss Julia, I protest," replied Graham laughing, though now it was his turn for the color to rise. "You do me injustice. My comparison did not soar so high, but only to the cup, that Hebe presented. Mrs. Butler made the other application. I'll take a drumstick, as most appropriate, and give her the wings."

"There's one thing certain," said the old lady, half-smiling, half-tearful, "none of the gods or goddesses of all Olympus, ever did a poor mortal such good service as you two have rendered me. I don't think I ever heard your voice so sweet as when it greeted our ears to-night, Maurice."

"My dear madam, I should have been here long before, if the alarm had reached us sooner," answered Graham earnestly, while his eyes acknowledged the unspoken thanks in the young lady's glance with even more feeling.

When supper was over, and the maids had removed the dishes, Graham drew a sofa close to the hearth, and placing the pillows in a comfortable position, with filial tenderness led Mrs. Butler to it, and said, "It is hardly safe to go to bed to-night, as we do not know what may happen before morning. But you are not strong enough, nor is it necessary that you should watch. Please rest here. I don't want Mr. Butler to find you ill, when he returns."

"Oh, if he were only here!" she cried, giving expression at last to a wish that had been echoing through her heart all night.

"Yes, indeed, we only need him to make our circle complete," replied Graham. "But he at least is safe from danger; and I trust when news of the flood reaches him, he will have no difficulty in returning home."

"We are all safe in God's hand. That's my greatest comfort." Then with a quick impulse, she threw her arms around Graham's neck, and drawing down his cheek to her lips, said, "You'll let me give you a mother's kiss, when you remember how often her heart aches for her own boy's caresses."

Forgetting all but the lonely, bereaved mother, Graham knelt by her side, and with a soft touch, smoothed her gray curls, as he whispered: "Dear Mrs. Butler, you gave your best treasure to your country; I am not worthy to stand in his place, but if the tenderest love and respect can comfort or serve you, don't hesitate to claim it."

"I believe you, Maurice. I have longed so often for your sympathy, and you always remind me of our noble Will. Now my heart adopts you." Then she turned her face to the wall, and tears relieved her overwrought feelings. When Maurice rose to his feet, they were alone, Julia, with innate delicacy, having quietly passed to another room. Brushing the moisture from his own eyes, he went out to examine if all was yet safe. The water remained the same on the first floor, but as he stepped on the veranda, he could hear the rush of the current on each side of them, as cakes of ice, parts of fences and broken trees clashed against each other. The night was so dark that he could see nothing beyond what the glare of the lantern made visible. Then, with a long pole, he tried the depth

of the water as far out as possible, and, with unspeakable thankfulness, found that it was slowly falling. As he turned to enter the house, a timid voice at the window asked :

“ Mr. Graham, may I come out and see how it looks, too? ”

“ Give me your hand, Miss Julia ; it won't do to risk a fall.”

He led her to the balustrade, then threw the light of his lantern far out over the waste of water. Julia first gazed down on the large cakes of ice that were hurrying by them, then up to the starless sky, and off to the intense darkness beyond the lantern's gleam, and, with a shudder, unconsciously drew nearer Graham, as she said ; “ Isn't it fearful? Just think what a night it would have been to us if you hadn't come ! ”

Graham grasped her hand with a firmer pressure, and the look that met hers was so deep and tender, that she was startled ; and, trembling like one dizzy with the swift tide, she said, in a low tone : “ Take me in, please ; I can't bear this any longer.”

He led her carefully back, and as soon as she reached the window, she sprang through, and flew to her own room. Graham fastened everything securely, and then held a long consultation with Jim, as to the ways and means, should the siege last. But mentally he shook himself, like one waking from a happy dream, saying, “ Maurice

Graham, what does this mean? Why is your heart beating in such an unusual hurry, and why did that young lady fly, like a startled bird, to her nest? It was you who frightened her. Come, come, don't make a fool of yourself again, but remember your warning about Hunt. You may be sincere enough, but she and the world will give you credit for no better motives."

When he returned to Mrs. Butler, Julia was sitting on a low stool by her side, and looked up with a shy glance, like one half tempted to run away again. But Graham addressed the old lady in his usual quiet manner, and, telling her the improved condition of affairs, turned the conversation to other topics. After a little, she urged him to take a nap, as he must be very tired. But with a bright smile, he asked her if she knew what was the penalty when a sentinel slept at his post. And after a little skillful talk, he drew Julia into a description of her experiences abroad. She soon forgot her embarrassment, and in her perfect mimicry of the different nationalities, and account of amusing and unusual scenes, she so charmed her listeners that Mrs. Butler forgot her anxiety, and Graham, if not asleep, was certainly off his guard.

While the hours were passing in peace and pleasure within the upper rooms of Mr. Butler's mansion, a very different scene was witnessed by its proprietor.

Fearing from the sudden change in the temperature that there might come a movement of the ice, Mr. Butler left New York for home Wednesdaynoon. On their way, tidings of the flood reached them, and as they drew near the river, word came from the conductor that they could not work through.

Mr. Butler's anxiety to reach home was now intense, and as this feeling was shared by many other passengers, they went to the platform, to look at the prospect. The night was growing dark, but they could see water ahead of them, running over the track and carrying large cakes of ice. Then a report came from the engineer, that a field of ice in front was moving slowly, and heading right across the track. Their only chance was to push through before the main body reached them.

So Mr. Butler headed a party of passengers and brakemen, who rushed to the front of the engine, and while they clung on with one hand, with the other used poles and canes to turn aside the boulders of ice, logs and fences borne on the swift tide across their path.

As men who felt that their lives and all they held dearest was in peril, they fought and felt their way slowly through these obstacles, only to find insurmountable ones beyond. They reached the next station in safety, but there all further progress was abandoned.

Mr. Butler, by offering a large reward, succeeded in obtaining a man to take him by mountain roads to Cedar Ridge. Here he had a faint hope of finding his wife and Julia. But although disappointed in this, he was relieved to know that Graham was with them. An immense crowd had gathered on the cliffs, at the foot of Mr. Gordon's lawn, where a large bonfire tinged both the clouds and water with a dull red glow, and leaped high in flickering flames as fresh pine knots were added.

Mr. Butler pushed through to the edge of the cliff, just as the cry was raised, "There comes the upper gorge!"

Looking up the stream they saw, first, a mass of loose ice, carrying with it lumber and driftwood; then many recognized the remains of Fuller's old mill; and as it rushed by, John Fuller's head and shoulders were thrown up, bruised and ghastly, above the water.

"My God!" exclaimed Mr. Butler; "there's the old man himself. Can't he be saved?"

"No, no," said a man near him; "he was dead before he reached this."

Butler turned quickly, and saw Hunt stagger back from the bank, with a face almost as pale as the corpse in front. Both visions lasted but for a moment. Then the great wall of ice came plunging on, till it reached the accumulation below,

when it piled up in uncouth towers and pinnacles, incessantly rearing themselves up and falling again, as they crashed and ground against the gorge below.

CHAPTER XV.

A TARDY LOVER.



WHILE Julia Earle was giving Mrs. Butler and Graham a glowing description of her sail down the Rhine, on a moonlight night in August, there came a sudden recall to present surroundings, a loud cracking noise, like a distant cannonade.

All sprang to their feet in terror, and Graham rushed out on the balcony to ascertain the cause. It was daylight now, and, looking up the river, he saw that the gorges had broken loose, and the flood having gained the full mastery was driving them before it. Returning quickly, he said, "All the ice is moving! Let us go up on the roof. It is a grand sight, and if there comes danger to us we are safer there."

He wrapped Mrs. Butler in a thick shawl, and putting his arm around her, almost carried her up the next flight of stairs, while calling back to Julia, "I wish I could help you too. Keep close behind us."

In a few moments all the family were out on

the roof. The house stood some distance back from the river. But now they seemed in the midst of it, as they saw the water full of cakes of ice flowing all around them. Already nearly abreast of them was the immense mass, like a great tidal wave, not of water but crystal boulders and misshapen blocks, rolling, tumbling, clashing against each other, with a noise like the sharp rattle of musketry; while the unseen current roared and hissed up from beneath, as it pressed remorselessly forward.

As the great mass passed on, large blocks of ice fell out, as from the ranks of a retreating foe, and were piled up on either bank, and left to waste slowly away.

On the other side, a little below them, was the town, with its inhabitants also upon the housetops, gazing at the same grand spectacle.

"Oh! look, Mr. Graham!" said Julia, as the ice wave drew near the bridge between them and the town. "That bridge is covered with people. It, and they too, will surely be carried away."

Scarcely had she spoken, when like an enemy making a last charge, the gorge reared up in front of the piers, then fell with a terrific crash upon them. But the first violence of the onset was gone; and crushed, ground to fragments, the gorge was pressed between the piers, scraping them only with its sharp, jagged teeth on either side; and unable

to do more harm, it slowly staggered round the bend of the river, out of sight.

Then cheer after cheer rang through the air, as the imperiled town realized its safety. But old Mrs. Butler knelt down on the roof, and lifted her tearful eyes to heaven. The rest of the group involuntarily joined her, while Graham offered fervent thanksgivings for danger removed and lives spared.

It was late in the afternoon, when two weary horsemen, wet and splashed, reached the house. So much had the waters abated by this time that Graham met and admitted them at the front door. It was Mr. Butler and Hunt, who, with great difficulty, had succeeded in forcing their way through the accumulation of ice and debris blocking the roads between there and Cedar Ridge. A servant informed Julia that her brother-in-law had arrived with Mr. Butler, and she rushed down stairs to receive them, followed as rapidly as possible by Mrs. Butler. The old gentleman had eyes for his wife only, and in the dimly lighted hall Julia still took Hunt for Gordon; and in her impulsive way ran right into his open arms, saying, "You see I am safe. Was Grace dreadfully anxious?"

Hunt clasped her for a moment in a close embrace, as he whispered, "Dearest Julia, I can't tell you my joy to find you safe, or the terrible anxiety I have endured since I knew of your danger."

But instantly freeing herself, she said in a low passionate tone, "How dare you take such a liberty! You knew I thought you were Frank." And turning she sped up-stairs, as fast as she had descended. Reaching her room, she fastened the door, and with cheeks burning with shame and anger began pacing the floor, and saying to herself, "Julia Earle! will you never learn self-control? You deserve to be treated so. Suppose it had been Frank. Was there any reason why you should receive him with such open arms? Precious little either of them risked while the danger lasted. And now for Hunt to dare to address me in that fashion, and talk about the *anxiety* he has endured in my behalf. Actions speak louder than words. Graham risked his life to come to us. And to think he should have seen me rush down into that man's arms. I declare, I am ashamed to show my face again to-night. What scrapes my thoughtlessness is always getting me into—but Mr. Graham is too true a gentleman to take advantage—except—well, perhaps—on the balcony last night—I think he acted a little from impulse then too;" and Julia sat down before her fire, and went off into a long reverie, which, to judge from the frequent smiles that curved her lips, was of a pleasanter nature than her first soliloquy.

But the dinner-bell made a sudden interruption, and rising, she went to the glass to smooth her

ruffled plumage, saying, as she shook her finger at the reflected image, "There's no use. You have to face the situation. But now see how circumspect you can be for once."

On her way to the sitting-room she encountered Hunt, who stopped her, and said, with a manner that was both apologetic and dignified, "Miss Julia, I suppose I ought to have known that such a cordial reception was not for me. But won't you do me the justice to believe that my joy in seeing you again overcame all other feelings? If you knew what exertions I made to get to you, when I became aware of your danger, you would not treat me with such scorn. I was half way home, when news of the floods above reached me. I rode back as fast as I could to cross the bridge, but was told there that water was running over the flats between here and the bridge, fifteen feet deep. No horse, even, could make headway against it. I returned home, hoping to find that you and Mrs. Butler, having been earlier warned of the danger, had come immediately to Cedar Ridge. I was relieved to know that Graham had gone to your assistance, although I can hardly tell you how jealous I was, that he should have a privilege for which I had so anxiously striven."

Julia looked up in his face, and thought, "He is really very handsome. I wish I could put full faith in his professions." But, feeling that she had

done him injustice, she held out her hand with more cordiality than she meant to show, and said, "I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Hunt, for your effort to help us. We were really in no danger. As for our meeting, my own heedlessness was as much at fault as your presumption. We will both promise never to err again."

"I can't do that," replied Hunt, laughing, while he still held her hand; "I only wish you would give me another chance."

Mr. Butler and Graham then entered the hall, and Julia snatching her hand away, ran up to welcome the former home again. Stooping down to kiss her the old gentleman whispered, "My dear, you thanked the wrong man," then added aloud, "Young gentleman, kissing a pretty girl is a privilege old fellows like me can claim, when you may only look on."

"Unless one can secure a special privilege," said Hunt.

"Hah! Have you such a charter?" asked the old man, eyeing both him and Julia suspiciously over his glasses.

"It wouldn't be a bad thing to hold," he replied, meeting his glance with a smile that baffled its scrutiny.

But Julia exclaimed with spirit, "I don't believe in monopolies of any kind. Mr. Butler, your wife says that dinner is getting cold."

At the table the damage done by the flood and ice was the absorbing topic, and Julia and Mrs. Butler fully realized how comfortable their position had been, compared with the narrow escapes and terrible sufferings of many of their poorer neighbors.

"Don't you think this will end the strike, and make men, who have lost so much, willing to go to work?" asked Julia.

"It may influence some, but not the leaders, I fear," answered Graham.

"I saw Sam Walker on the train last night, and heard him boasting of their ability to hold out as long as you can. I thought I would tell you he had come back," said Mr. Butler.

"Will you arrest him now?" asked Julia, turning to Hunt.

"No, not unless he commits more violence. I am not surprised to hear that he has returned," answered Hunt.

"Isn't there some compromise that could be made, so they might go to work again? It is terrible to think of the sufferings of their helpless families," said Mrs. Butler.

"The men must yield, or we place ourselves at the mercy of a commune even more unreasonable than the one so lately crushed in France. They would compel us to use our property according to their dictation. I force no man to work, neither will

I allow them to force me to use my capital other than as I choose. If they do not like my terms, let them find those that will give them better," answered Hunt.

"But they say in New York, that you coal operators combine and raise the price of coal, while the miner gains no advantage. I must say, I don't see what redress the miner has but in strikes. I should be sorry to have such men as most of their leaders are get the upper hand. But as it was in France, so I believe that here injustice has caused this general and persistent suspension, though, no doubt, terrorism now holds the majority in thrall," said Mr. Butler.

"I believe that labor and capital have each equal rights," said Graham; "and as wages must fall with the market, by an equal right they should advance with it. But to attempt to compel this, by intimidation and violence, is a conspiracy against personal liberty which would bring back the reign of terror."

"Well, I don't know but the labor question will be the irrepressible conflict, for this generation, as the agitation about slavery was in the past," responded Mr. Butler.

"Do you know whether the flood did much damage to our village, or if any lives were lost?" said Graham to Hunt.

"I have had no chance to find out. John, the

coachman, said that most of the families had to flee to the mountain, and that the cottages there were swarming last night, with men, women and children. I have not heard of any lives being lost."

"Except old John Fuller," interrupted Mr. Butler. "Graham, you remember we were speaking of him Sunday. His old mill was carried away, and he with it. I can't understand how it could have happened."

"It is said that he was afraid the flood would take it off, and went down hoping to save it; which was a very foolish thing," said Hunt carelessly. Then he began describing to Julia the appearance of the upper ice gorge, as it came down upon the lower.

Mrs. Butler, looking up, noticed that the waiting-maid seemed anxious to speak, and asked, "What is it, Lizzie?"

"Please, ma'am, a man by the name of John Fuller called to see Mr. Butler the day he went to New York, and was in great distress because he wasn't home."

"Why didn't you tell me, Lizzie?" asked Mrs. Butler.

"Because, ma'am, I had never seen him here before, and he was dressed so shabby, and walked so unsteady, that I thought he was drunk; but now I'm sure I was mistaken, and I'm so sorry."

"John Fuller never drank. I am afraid he was

in trouble, and I might have helped him," said Mr. Butler; and he cast a keen glance at Hunt, as memory recalled the glimpse he caught of Hunt's face, as Fuller's corpse passed them. He did not know to whom Fuller had mortgaged his property, but now he had strong suspicions, and as he had always felt that Hunt would be very merciless to any one in his power, he resolved as soon as possible to visit Mrs. Fuller, and render her every assistance he could. Keeping these thoughts, however, to himself, he claimed the attention of all, by a graphic description of his ride on the engine, and battle with the ice floes.

Grace had sent an urgent invitation to Mrs. Butler to close the house, and make Cedar Ridge their home, till the weather was settled and they could repair damages. As the evening advanced, Mrs. Butler noticed that her husband had taken a heavy cold, and decided to accept the offer, if he would remain with her free from further exposure till it was cured; so that night arrangements were made for closing up, and an adjournment to Cedar Ridge on the morrow.

While Mr. Butler went to escort Hunt to his room, Julia and Graham were left for a few minutes alone. She stood gazing with a very sober face, into the fire, and Graham, coming up beside her, said: "Why so pensive to-night, Miss Julia?"

"O Mr. Graham! these fearful escapes, and the

suffering all around me, frightens me. You know that I came here, a gay, thoughtless girl, and all these things have fallen like a great dark shadow over me. It doesn't seem as if I ever could go back to the old, gay life again."

"Would you if you could?"

"Yes. One doesn't like to be unhappy. You see, I have always been among a crowd till now, and have lived very much like a butterfly, I suppose you think; but at school, I was the ring-leader, if there was any fun or mischief afoot; and while traveling, I enjoyed each day as it came without any thought of the morrow. Now I want to go back to that old pleasure in everything, and yet I don't believe I can."

"Don't you think you can find something better now?" asked Graham, smiling. "If I were to compare you to anything, it wouldn't be a butterfly, Miss Julia."

"What would it be?" she asked, looking up eagerly.

"Did you ever read the story of Undine, and how she found her soul?"

"Yes.. But she, being a water nymph, could not have had it frightened into her by floods and ice gorges. As I remember, it came through the love of Knight Hildebrand."

Then, realizing how he might interpret her thoughtless speech, she blushed deeply, and say-

ing a hasty "good-night," sought refuge in her room. There she threw herself down on the sofa, and burst into tears.

Mrs. Butler, who had entered a few minutes before, to see if all was comfortable, came quickly to her side and asked :

"My poor child, what has happened to grieve you?"

"Oh, nothing; but I don't know what Mr. Graham will think of me," she said, dashing away her tears, and trying to smile.

"I don't believe he has a very bad opinion of you," replied the old lady, with a very unequivocal smile of her own; "but if you wish, I can inquire."

"O Mrs. Butler! you know I didn't mean that," said Julia, while the hot blood rushed to her face. "I have been saying and doing such mortifying things all the afternoon and evening, that I have no patience with myself. I would give anything for your quiet poise of manner."

"My darling, with your disposition, you will have a hard struggle always to act with self-possession. But I believe your heart to be so true and noble, that it will not let you go very far astray. It was your enthusiasm and energy, that carried me so comfortably through the anxieties of last night. Now you are suffering the reaction. Sleep will banish these troubles. Good-night,

my child ; I am glad we have not to part to-morrow."

The flood had brought loss and suffering to many families. But perhaps in no house was there more bitter sorrow than in the old Fuller homestead, the morning after the final departure of the ice. Mrs. Fuller had spent an exceedingly anxious night, passing from one sick bed to another, for two of her grandchildren were prostrated with fever. Her husband and son had been away all night, and when Andrew returned he brought back the terrible news, that his father was drowned. And as if the poor wife's cup of sorrow was not overflowing, her little grandson ran in and handed her a crumpled note, saying, "Grandpa came to me last night, and told me to give you that when I got up."

There she read, that, driven by his troubles to despair, he had voluntarily sought that death ; that the threat which had been hanging over them so long had now fallen, and that in a few days they would have no shelter to cover their heads. The note dropped from her hand, and for a time she sat like one stunned ; then as she slowly recovered her senses, she heard her son muttering fierce curses as he frantically strode up and down the room. Lifting her eyes to a little picture over the mantelpiece, she read the words, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

They had helped her in many a sore strait before. Her lips moved a few moments in silent prayer, then going up to her son, she said in a tone of calm authority, "Stop, Andrew. Such words will not help us. We must pray God to direct us, then act."

"Much good has praying done! I tell you, mother, God and man are both against us. I am almost tempted to follow father's example, and so end the struggle."

"What! leave your mother, sick sister, and these helpless children, to meet it alone? For shame, Andrew! Your poor old father was broken down by trouble. His mind was so shattered that I don't believe he knew what he was doing. He thought only of sparing us the extra burden. Alas! people never realize how much heavier a burden such a death brings."

"But, mother, what can we do? It is 'most a pity the flood hadn't swept us all off. I didn't mean to tell you, but I hold my present position at the risk of my life. They frightened the other engineer away, and have twice warned me."

"O my son! this is terrible. Is there nothing else you can do?"

"Nothing that would begin to support us, and beside, it is all that I know how to do well. The only thing I see that's feasible, is for us to sell all

we can, which that cold-blooded villain cannot claim. Of course, at a forced sale it will be sacrificed; but we cannot help ourselves. Then we will move to a house close by the colliery, where I work. Surrounded by others, I will not be as much exposed as I am, taking this long walk to and from the farm."

"That's what we will do at once. You make the outside arrangements, and I will collect all we can sell. Surely God will protect us, if we do our duty."

"I trust more to my stout club and pistol."

"My son, old Cromwell's charge to his men was, 'Trust God, and keep your powder dry.' He relied as much on the first as on the last."

"Well, I acknowledge I haven't much faith. Where is God's justice in these repeated blows? Certainly, mother, you do not need such bitter discipline."

"Andrew, dear, perhaps you need the lesson, and the stroke will be lifted when you cease to rebel."

Mrs. Fuller then kissed him good-bye, and saw him go out, possibly never to come back alive.

That she did not yield to despair in this accumulation of grief, is only another instance of woman's fortitude; for, often where man utterly succumbs and breaks down, mind and body, or rashly takes

his own life to escape the misery he has no courage to meet, a true Christian woman, trusting in higher strength, rises up and battles through the difficulty.

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CHAPTER XVI.

A COWARDLY ATTACK.



EARLY a week after the flood there came an afternoon when the swelling buds and springing grass gave welcome token that the long winter was over. Annie Malcome, tempted by the soft balmy air, went to visit Biddy Maguire, at her cottage still higher up the mountain.

Returning about five o'clock by a wood path, she heard a cry for help, out on the road near at hand. Pushing her way through the bushes, so that she could see and not be seen, she found that four masked men had made a sudden attack upon her old friend and lover Andrew Fuller, and that he was vainly trying to defend himself against such fearful odds. Flying back to Biddy's cottage, she told her what she had seen. Bridget was just in the act of combing her hair, and the great red mop stood around her head like a lion's mane. But stopping for neither cap nor hood, she caught up her brother's double-barreled gun, which she always kept loaded; and handing Annie a pistol, also loaded, she asked, "Kin ye shoot?"

"Yes," said Annie, feeling nerved for anything.

"Thin coom; for, be gorry, it's them cussed Molly Maguires! Here, Towser, ye baste, move soft till ye see yer inemy; then let fly for yer life an' yer honor."

Quickly but silently they went out, till near enough to mark the men. They had thrown Fuller down by this time, and were beating him. But obeying a signal from Bridget, the dog sprang through the ticket, with a noise between a howl and a yell, while Bridget shouted, "Fire," and at the same instant came a discharge from both gun and pistol. The men saw only the smoke, and shot and bullets whistled uncomfortably near.

Not knowing how many came to the rescue they dropped their clubs and fled. Bridget sent after them a parting shot, as she called to her dog, "Go it, Towser, don't ye gin 'em a bit of a shtart, the mane, cowardly varmint, to be fightin' four to one." Then laying down her gun, she added, "I'll waste no more powder on ye, unless ye coom to closer quarters; thin ye'll find Biddy can thrash ye wid her two fists."

Fuller tried to rise, but his leg was broken, and he fell back, faint from pain and exhaustion.

Annie, seeing his condition, said to Bridget, "What shall we do? He can't walk, and the men may return."

"Och! niver ye fear with Towser afther 'em. If

ye'll hould the weepsons, Miss Annie, I'll carry the young mon as aisy as a babby. We'll take him to me castle in the woods, and divil a bit will they know where to find him. Me poor darlin'," she added, as she lifted Fuller in her strong arms, as if he were but a feather, "if Biddy Maguire hadn't been purty handy, ye wouldn't a seed the mornin'."

When she reached her hut she laid him tenderly down on her bed, and turning to Annie said, "Noo ye must see what's the mather wid him, fer my big hands are bether handlin' guns than broken bones. I'll be gettin' ready for the next fight. Bedad, an' it was just the purtiest sight to see thim four blaggards runnin' from two women, an' one a Maguire at that; their coat-tails flyin' shtrait behind, an' their false faces, which were a hape honester nor their own, droppin' afther 'em."

"But, Bridget, I can't set his leg. He must have a doctor," interrupted Annie.

"You jist be quoiet till Towser comes back to kape guard. Thin I'll go fer yer brother Ned, or the dochter, which iver cooms handiest. Ah! there's me dog. Good luck to ye, Towser. We won the battle, didn't we, me jewel? Talk of a dog not havin' sinse, when they kin show ye they know a hape more nor their bethers. Noo, mind ye, kape all safe, till I'm afther coomin'."

But first taking out a bottle, she said, "Here's a drap o' whisky left. Yer give him that, an' if

there's a wake shpot in him, it'll foind it quicker nor lightenin'. I'll be back afore darruk wid the docther."

Then taking her pistol, she sallied forth. Finding that Malcome had not yet returned home, she went on toward the breaker. As she was passing the large gate of Cedar Ridge, she saw Maurice Graham who had just entered. So in tones that might almost have reached the house, she called, "Misther Graham ! will ye stop a bit ?"

He looked back and, recognizing her, waited till she overtook him.

"Ye'r jist the mon I wanted to see, though I were lookin' for Ned Malcome, or the docther, which iver coom first."

"Well, Bridget, which of the three will serve you best? You seem to have started in a hurry; or did you lose your hat by the way?" asked Graham, laughing at her absurd appearance.

"Faith!" she said, catching up one of her red locks. "I forgot me hair intirely. Yer see, sir, I were jist a'combin' of it, whin Miss Annie fetched me word of the fight; an' yer honor kin aisy belave, I didn't shtop for me looks, whin there was bluid bein' shpilt. But Towser an' meself went fer 'em jist as fasht as iver we could. An', sir, they thought a whole rig'ment were afther 'em, and rin as from the very ould boy himself."

"I don't wonder," said Graham, still laughing;

"I don't believe my courage would have been proof against such an attack. But what do you want of the doctor, was any one hurt?"

"Yis, Fuller, I belave she called him; an' he's at my castle noo, wid Miss Annie an' Towser kapin' guard. I don't like to bodder ye, sir, but I'm unaisy to lave him so long. May be ye'll git the dochter fer me?"

"I think Dr. Smith is visiting Mr. Butler, at the house now. Come with me, and I will find him for you. Then you can tell us all that has happened."

Graham was now seriously alarmed, and wasting no more words, he brought Bridget right into the room where the doctor and Mr. Butler were conversing with the ladies. All started to their feet, and an involuntary ripple of laughter passed around the circle, as they saw Graham's companion. He at first did not realize the sensation their appearance caused; and approaching the doctor at once, said, "Bridget Maguire has just informed me that an attack has been made upon Andrew Fuller, near her cottage on the mountain. She succeeded in rescuing him, but he is injured and needs your services immediately."

"Andrew Fuller!" exclaimed Mr. Butler; "ah! I see, he was a 'black-leg.' But, Bridget, how did it happen?"

"Well, yer honor, I'll tell ye all about it, if the

leddies will excuse me looks. As I was sayin' to Misther Graham, I were jist makin' me toilet, whin Miss Annie coom rinnin' in, whiter nor a ghost, an' said four black devils were out on the road, fightin' agin one mon. They were masked, moind ye, but, be gorry, I know'd 'em right off. An' clappin' me two hands on me brither's big gun, an' givin' the pistol to Miss Annie, we shtarted to the rescue, wid Towser, me dog, to bring up the rear. Whin we got near enough, an' where the bushes were thick, I give Towser the wink; an' he went fer 'em wid a noise yer would hov' thought would a raised the dead; an' sure, I did me best to help him, lettin' fire me own gun at the same time, while I telled Miss Annie to pop hers too. An' would ye belave it, sir, she did, jist as if she were a soger born! But the inemy rin so fast, we couldn't git a chance to hit 'em afore they was out o' sight an' Towser gaspin' fer breath wid tryin' to catch 'em."

While Bridget told her story, she stood dressed as we have described, in her favorite attitude with arms akimbo, only her fiery locks, which the wind had not improved, gave her a still more uncouth appearance. Bursts of uncontrollable laughter followed her account of the battle. But turning with perfect unconcern, she walked up to Dr. Smith, and said, "Will ye coom noo, an' do yer part? fer I kin break bones aisier nor I kin mend 'em."

"Yes, I'll get my hat and drive as fast as my horse can carry me."

"Yer had better take me wid ye, sir ; or ye'll be drivin' round till doom's day, afore ye'd foind the shpot."

"Yes, Doctor ; I can testify to the truth of that statement," said Graham, laughing.

"I never refuse the company of a lady. But is it safe to trust myself with this Tisiphone of the woods? Are your two sisters waiting for me at your hidden castle?"

"Faith ! an' I've nary a relation in the worreld, since me brither died. An if I had two sisters, I'd bid them be quit o' the name of Maguire as quick as they could. But I didn't take yer honor for a fool. If yer agoin' to kape me wid palaverin', I'll not be boddered wid ye."

"You made a mistake, Doctor," said Ada ; "she is not one of the Furies, but a Nemesis."

"Who's that callin' me a fury?" asked Bridget, turning sharply on her ; "I'm as paccable an' dacent as yerself, as Miss Annie or ony of the Malcomes will tell ye."

"She said you were a Nemesis, Bridget, which means that you avenge the wrongs of the innocent," replied Graham.

"Noo, Misther Graham, ye said ye'd git me help, but, be jabers, if they're jist fer callin' me names, whin I've an honest one, me mither giv me, I'll

be no longer fooled wid ye, fer I tould Miss Annie I'd be back gin darruk."

And Bridget turned to go, in a spirit of righteous indignation.

"Yes, indeed, Doctor, what a dreadful position for that poor girl; alone up on the mountain with a wounded man. Suppose those men should return! I don't wonder you are in a hurry, Bridget," exclaimed Julia.

"You are right. We have no time to lose. But some one ought to go and tell his friends what has happened," said the doctor.

"I intend to follow you immediately on horseback, and when I know how much he is injured, will go with word to his mother," replied Graham.

"No, Graham, return here. I will take the word to his mother," said Mr. Butler. "If the doctor and you all hadn't made such a fuss about this cold, I should have been there before."

"Don't go to-night, my dear; let Maurice take the message to her now, and you can see her to-morrow," urged his wife.

"No, wife, I must go myself. I knew her when a girl; she is in sore trouble now. Perhaps I can help her, as no one else can. Get back as soon as possible, Graham."

This he promised to do, while Grace urged him to ascertain all that was needed for the wounded man's relief, and Bridget soon had the satisfac-

tion of returning with all the assistance she desired.

Annie Malcome when left alone with Fuller became so alarmed at his death-like pallor, that she gave him a small portion of the stimulus Bridget had recommended. This revived him so much that he opened his eyes, and seeing her bending over him, exclaimed, "Miss Annie! am I still alive?" The last I remember, I was trying to defend myself from four ruffians, who were beating me with clubs. Now you are so kind that I should think I were in heaven, if it wer'n't that some strange twinges make me feel that I'm not yet rid of the body."

"Keep still, Andrew, I beseech you, or you will make yourself worse. I'll tell you all that's happened." She then related the story of his rescue, and how Bridget had gone for a doctor.

"And you are alone with me on this mountain? Suppose those murderers return and find us, how can I defend you? O Miss Annie! you might better have left me to my fate."

"We must trust God. He has saved you in such a wonderful manner, I don't think he will let a worse fate come now."

Fuller was in too much pain to answer at once, but when Annie again gave him the stimulus he looked up and said: "I suppose you think that I ought to be grateful. I am, to you—but not to God."

"Andrew, how can you speak so?"

"Miss Annie, if you knew all you wouldn't blame me."

"I know your father was drowned. Think how terrible it would be for your mother, if you had been killed too."

"This is worse, for I'd have been out of the way," he said bitterly, then added in rapid, passionate words: "You talk about a merciful God, who is just and loving. Yet my mother, the best woman who ever lived, has had nothing but trouble since I can remember. My sister marries a man who runs father into debt, and after, most breaking her heart, and ruining her health, deserts her and her children. Father has bad luck in everything, and gets into the clutches of that Shylock Hunt, who presses him till driven to despair he drowns himself. Day after to-morrow there is to be a sale of our home and all we have. Of course Hunt will get it. Here am I helpless on my back, and they all turned out of doors. Have I much cause for gratitude, think you?"

"O Andrew! this is terrible," said Annie, her voice shaken with sobs. She was so overwhelmed with this accumulation of trouble that she could find no words to comfort him. But perhaps her tears of sympathy were more healing, for after a little, in a softer tone, he said:

"Poor little Annie. She can't love me. But


she's sorry for me; and she risked her life to save me. I'll never forget that. Don't cry, dear, I can bear the pain easier than that it should grieve you. I am so faint, is there any water here?"

She gave him a drink, then with her handkerchief gently bathed his face. His sufferings became so intense that he could not talk, and Annie grew almost sick with the long suspense. Night was closing down dark around them, and the shrill cry of the whippoorwill often made her start in terror.

As she looked at the strong man so helpless before her, and realized how he must suffer in mind and body, her sympathy and affection were drawn toward him more strongly than in all the months of his devoted attentions.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHECKMATED.

S THE darkness increased, Annie still kept her lonely watch; she did not dare to light a lamp, lest it should draw the enemy upon them. She felt sure that Bridget could find her way without it, if she succeeded in obtaining help. But as she sat in the faint flickering firelight, listening to the moans of the wounded man, and the rustling of the trees in the wind, a terrible dread came over her lest Bridget also might have been waylaid, and the long night might pass without any help reaching them.

Her brother often remained at the breaker, and she was filled with anxiety about her mother's helpless condition. There are times when minutes and hours seem days and weeks, and Annie could not realize that only that afternoon she had been hunting in sunny nooks for anemones and to see if the arbutus was in bloom, with a heart that, at the time of searching for these old friends of her childhood, had found again some of its early happiness. Now it seemed, in the accumulation of anxiety and trouble, as if no pleasure could ever

stir it again. She forgot the old proverb, "It's a long lane that has no turning."

At last Towser, who was lying near the door, sprang toward it with a savage growl. Fuller, starting up, exclaimed, "My God! they have found us." But in a moment more, as the dog began wagging his stump of a tail, and whining to get out, Annie said, "Don't be alarmed, Andrew. I am sure it is Bridget. See, the dog knows her."

And almost immediately, confirmation came from Bridget's voice, calling, "It's me, me darlin', wid the Dochter and Misther Graham."

Annie had not seen Graham since the school on Easter Sunday, and now in spite of herself, the warm color flushed her face at this unexpected meeting. Fuller noticed it, and he ground his teeth with jealousy, and the intense pain his sudden exertion had caused.

The doctor immediately examined his wounds, and set the broken leg, Graham rendering all the help he could.

In reply to his inquiries as to the extent of the injuries Fuller had received, Dr. Smith said that he did not think they were serious, but Fuller had had a terrible shock to his nerves, and as his pulse was very high, there might be other injuries of which he could not judge immediately; he would therefore remain with his patient all night.

Graham proposed to return and watch with him,

but Fuller refused his assistance in such a surly manner that he was puzzled to know wherein he had offended, and feeling that it was better not to irritate him further, offered to see Annie home. But she declined, saying that her brother Ned would soon be there.

When Graham returned to Cedar Ridge, he found Julia standing on the porch, with a light shawl thrown about her.

"Why, Miss Earle!" he exclaimed. "You can't be star-gazing this dark night?"

"No. I came out for a little air. O Mr. Graham! I am so glad you are safely back. Isn't it very imprudent to be riding around these lonely mountain roads, when such dreadful things are happening?"

They were now standing under the hall lamp, and looking down in her eyes with a bright smile, he asked, "Is it ever imprudent to do one's duty?"

"Do you mean that in doing that, one will be protected?"

"No, not always, but there are risks that must be taken. My courage wasn't put to half the test that Annie Malcome met so bravely this afternoon."

Julia recalled a certain look on that girl's face the last time she saw her; and thinking, "It was for her sake he went, I understand the call of duty now," she turned abruptly away. He took a step

toward her as if to speak again, but pausing, decided to seek Mr. Butler at once.

He had not far to go, for this gentleman met him fully equipped for his drive, and said, "I heard your voice. Is Fuller seriously injured?"

"I hope not, sir; we can hardly tell yet. Dr. Smith will watch him carefully to-night. I am going with you, sir. I will remain in the carriage when we reach the farm-house, unless you need my help."

"Thank you, Graham, my wife will feel easier, and I shall be glad of your company."

After they had taken their seats in the close carriage Mr. Butler had ordered, he said to Graham: "I can't tell you how full of self-reproach I feel that I have not been more persistent in my efforts to help these old neighbors."

"You did what you could in the past, sir; one can't thrust help upon the unwilling. I can't understand why Fuller should manifest such a dislike toward me; I have not consciously injured him."

"Perhaps an explanation may come to-night."

During the rest of the drive both gentlemen became occupied with their own thoughts, and when the farm-house was reached, Mr. Butler went in alone. One of the children admitted him, and took him right to the room where their grandmother was sitting like one turned to stone, her eyes staring

and fixed, while the little ones were weeping around her, unable to move her.

"She's been like that," said the oldest girl, with a sob, "ever since a boy ran in and told us Uncle Andrew was murdered. He said he saw four men beating him to death."

Mr. Butler sat down in front of her, and took her hands, saying; "Mrs. Fuller, your son is not dead. God has spared him, and I trust he will live to be as old as we are."

Her eyes wavered and turned toward him, as she asked, in almost a whisper: "Did some one say he was alive?" But then the flood-gates of her grief being loosed, she sank upon her knees on the floor, and rocking herself to and fro, cried, between sobs and moans, "Oh no, he is dead! The boy said four men were beating him with clubs, 'way off on the lonely mountain. They threatened to kill him, but I could not think the Lord would let that trouble come too. John is gone—my babes are homeless, but 'oh, my son! my son! would to God I had died for thee!'"

Mr. Butler had to brush the tears from his eyes, and his voice trembled with emotion as, lifting her up, he pleaded: "Mrs. Fuller, look at me; listen to me, I beseech you. It is Joe Butler, your old friend, who tells you that Andrew is living. God has spared him to you; raised up friends to rescue him. He is now safe, and not dangerously injured,

I am told. Compose yourself, my dear madam, and believe that what I tell you is true."

She looked steadily a few moments, in his kind face, which was so full of sympathy, as if trying to realize what she had heard, then, although the tears were still rolling down her cheeks, she rose with a quiet dignity, and said: "Joseph Butler, I never had reason to doubt your word. I thank the Lord! He was better to me than my fears."

"Will you trust me still further, by telling me all your difficulties? As one of your oldest friends, I have come with the desire to do all that is in my power to help you. I can't tell you how I regret being absent from home when your husband called."

"It might have saved much misery. God's providences are mysterious, and trust is sometimes a hard lesson to learn. But, sir, I often used to tell John that if he would only try it, the road wouldn't have been so hard, or led to such a dark end," she added, with a heavy sigh.

Mrs. Fuller then called the children around her, and told them to go and tell their mother that Uncle Andrew was still alive, and bade them stay with her till she gave them permission to return; after which, she turned to Mr. Butler, and questioned him as to the attack and rescue of her son; and, at his request, told all the complications which had driven her husband to despair. She spoke of the disappointment they experienced when, in the ex-

citement of the coal discoveries, it was finally ascertained that their land possessed none. "Then, sir," she continued, "you know how gradually the milling business fell off. John was different from his father; he hadn't the faculty to draw business; he was reserved and proud, and farmers would run up bills, and somehow he couldn't manage to collect them. When Sarah married John Harris, things looked brighter. He seemed like a nice, steady man, doing a small grocery business. For a few years they lived very happily, and he seemed to be getting a little ahead. Andrew, too, had learned to be an engineer, and held a good place."

"Soon after the war, Harris came to my husband, and said that a number of friends had been investing their savings in oil, and had made large sums by it. He put in a little and found it paid splendidly; and Mr. Hunt had been urging him to invest more. So, to make a long story short, he persuaded my husband to endorse a note for him, as he wanted to raise funds for this venture; he setting forth in glowing terms, how rich we all would be.

"But before many months were gone, we found, instead of being rich, that we were that much poorer. This discouraged Harris, and he took to bad ways, drinking, gambling, and neglecting his business. John tried to hold him back, and when

he promised to reform set him up again. Finally he mortgaged this property to Mr. Hunt, for fifteen thousand dollars, as the only way to meet his liabilities, for Hunt had my husband and Harris completely in his power. Harris had sunk so low by this time that he was a perfect sot, and no one knows the abuse poor Sarah endured. At last he ran away and left her the miserable wreck of her former self she is now. We brought her home and tried to struggle on under our burden of debt, with five more to feed and clothe.

“Sarah’s mind was so shattered that many a night my husband and son had to hold her when the paroxysms of frenzy came on, and afterward she would be for days in a sort of stupor. As if this was not trouble enough, Andrew’s employer failed, and he was thrown out of work. In my distress I went to the little church here, feeling that I must find some comfort and help, or I could bear no more. The minister preached from that text over the mantelpiece, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee.” As I listened, I felt the whole weight of mine rolling off, and, sir, I have never tried to carry it alone since. I often urged John to go with me, and find the comfort I had obtained. But these troubles made him hard and bitter. He distrusted both God and man. Andrew is like him, and he became very bitter too, and I feared was being led astray.

“ Every year it was a harder struggle to raise the interest-money, and Mr. Hunt grew more and more pressing. The strike and hard times made it impossible for them to get work, or sell the place, especially as it was running down so fast. Many a time this last winter we’ve gone to bed cold and hungry. I saw that it was wearing fearfully on John, both in mind and body. Sometimes when you sent us some kind token of remembrance, I have urged him to go to you for help. But he said that you were very intimate with Gordon and Hunt. It wouldn’t help matters, or be any easier to pay the interest to you than to him. But I felt that you wouldn’t have been so hard on us, if a little behind. Mr. Hunt several times threatened to foreclose, but we parted with one thing after another, and so raised the money. Last week I noticed that John was more depressed than usual. But I thought it was partly the fear of the floods, and I was so taken up with the children, for two of them were very sick, that I couldn’t look after him as I should have done. The night the ice moved out, he came to me and said, as I was undressing the youngest, ‘Poor old wife, when forty years ago I asked you to share my fortunes for better or worse, I didn’t know to what I was binding you. Will you kiss me, and pray that a brighter future may be in store for us on the other side?’ I’ve no hope left for this. The flood may take us

all away before morning, and it would be almost a mercy.'

" 'John, John,' I said, 'don't talk so despairingly. God will take compassion and send brighter days.' One of the children called me in great distress just then, and I ran to her assistance, and never saw my husband again. He wrote me a letter, telling me that he could endure life no longer, and that we were soon to be turned on the street.

"Don't be too severe, Mr. Butler. It was wrong, but he was sorely tried. He thought Andrew could do better without him. On Friday there is to be a sale of our place and what little else we have. Hunt will have it all, though. Andrew had secured work again, but at the risk of his life. We trusted to get a little house near the colliery, where he wouldn't be so much exposed. Can you wonder, when the terrible news came that he was murdered, that hope and faith utterly failed?"

As Mrs. Fuller told her pathetic story, there was no excitement, no bitter reproaches; only sometimes she patiently wiped away the tears with the corner of her apron. Mr. Butler, however, listened, often pacing the floor rapidly, saying, "Oh! if I had only known;" and blowing his nose like the blast of a trumpet, or sitting with his face covered, while in spite of himself tears trickled through his fingers. When she finished, he took her hand in an almost reverent manner, and said, "I thought I drank the

cup of sorrow to the dregs, when I brought home the lifeless body of my only son from the battlefield of Gettysburgh. But, madam, I feel as if my trouble is nothing, compared to the burden you have so nobly sustained. My heart burns with indignation, when I realize that you owe it all to the cupidity and cruelty of one man. I have always distrusted Hunt, though I had no certain ground for suspicion. I wish I could bring upon him the punishment he deserves. But although I cannot restore the sad losses of the past, I can at least smooth your path somewhat in the future. I will see Hunt to-night, and pay him that mortgage in full. You shall not be disturbed in your old home, and I shall make it my business that you and yours are cared for, till Andrew is able to support you."

"God bless you, sir," cried the poor old woman ; and sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her apron, she gave way to tears more copious than she had often shed in her deepest sorrow. But now the bitterness of grief was gone, and these tears seemed to wash away much of the heavy accumulation of care and perplexity which had been resting upon her so long.

Mr. Butler took out a roll of bills, and laying them by her side, said that she must use those for her immediate needs. If Andrew ever became a prosperous man, he could return the principal.

But she need give herself no uneasiness. He had no children to provide for, and to relieve them would be the best investment he could make.

He promised to see Andrew in the morning, and free his mind from anxiety. He should have every care, he said, and be brought home as soon as it was safe to move him. And meantime he would send her frequent tidings of her son's welfare. He then bade her good-night, and joined Graham, who was waiting in the carriage.

"Maurice," he said, as he shut the door, after giving orders to the coachman to drive them home, "That Hunt is a villain."

"Mr. Butler, what do you mean? In all I've had to do with him he has been perfectly straightforward."

"Yes, I doubt if he has gone beyond the limits of the law in anything; he is too shrewd for that; but I have heard to-night of two men he has driven to ruin. And yet all I can do will be to pay him for a debt into which his devilish speculations drew them. Graham, you haven't taken stock in any of his gambling operations?"

"I have no money to invest, sir, and he knows my sentiments too well to urge it."

"I hope you will always stick to them, my boy. A slow penny honestly made is worth more than a pound borrowed for such risks."

He told Graham briefly of the trouble into which

Hunt had drawn Harris and Fuller, and its fearful results, and added, "I know Hunt made money by that operation. How they lost, or were cheated, I have no means of ascertaining. But I believe that a man who pursues that course will meet his day of reckoning. Sooner or later his sins will find him out. I tell you this to put you on your guard, but keep your own counsel and mine for the present."

When Mr. Butler entered the parlor at Cedar Ridge, he found Hunt seated in the bay-window, at a game of chess with Julia; Mr. Stokes was present also, paying most devoted attentions to Miss Ada, as she sat by the piano in the back parlor, playing little snatches of music now and then. Neither of these parties took any notice of the new-comer as he joined the circle around the fire. His wife looked up, and said she was glad he had returned. Grace inquired if Mrs. Fuller had heard the tidings? And Gordon put a few questions about the accident, and said that he hoped the miners would get tired of butchering each other after a while and go to work.

Mr. Butler made but brief replies, and placed his chair in such a position that he could be apparently resting yet take observations of all in the room.

He noticed a quick flush rise in Julia's cheek as Graham came in. But she seemed, if anything, still more absorbed in Hunt's low conversation, for the game was merely a matter of form. He watched

Graham's frequent glances toward her, over the paper he was pretending to read, and his pained expression as he rose and left the room.

"Is she going to be such a fool as to fall into that man's snares too?" Butler asked himself. "I thought that she had sense enough to like Graham, and I really believed that she was out watching for him to come back from his mountain ride. But there she is, flirting with Hunt at the top of her bent—seeing if she can't beat that girl in the next room. I declare, it disgusts me. I'm sorry I recommended her to Maurice, for I think he has taken a greater interest in her than he did in Miss Ada; and really I thought Julia was of the pure metal, that only needed the refining influences of a real love to bring out its true quality. But if she can turn from Graham to Hunt, after what even she knows of the two, I think he is well rid of her."

After the pretense of game was finished, Mr. Butler stepped up to Hunt, and requested a short private interview with him in the library. "Certainly, sir," said Hunt, rising, though an expression of annoyance passed over his face.

"Miss Julia, since our friend says that his business will not detain me long, perhaps you'll try your luck at another game?"

"No, Mr. Hunt, I'm too weak an antagonist. I will pass the challenge over to Mr. Butler; then

you will have a foeman worthy of your skill. I'd like to see you fairly checkmated for once."

"O Miss Julia! how can you be so cruel? I thought you were my friend."

"What! after you have robbed me of my knights, and left me neither refuge in castles or bishops? No; be sure I leave you in a very vengeful spirit."

"I hope to goodness she will keep it," muttered Butler to himself, "I only wish that I could checkmate him."

But Hunt trusted more in the bright blushing glance that Julia gave him, than in her threatening words.

When the library door was closed, Mr. Butler turned to Hunt and said, "I have been to see my old friend Mrs. Fuller to-night, and she has authorized me to pay the mortgage held by you on their place. Have you the papers here?"

Hunt's thoughts were very rapid. He saw that Butler's first move had checkmated him more completely than he meant he should ever find out. Till Mrs. Butler's servant-girl mentioned that John Fuller had sought help from Mr. Butler, the day he had left him in such despair, Hunt was not aware of any acquaintance between them. That knowledge alarmed him, and made him act with the utmost caution and celerity to push matters through before Butler could interfere. He looked upon it as a special good fortune that the old gen-

tleman's severe cold had confined him to the house, and he felt sure that he would obtain the prize he wished. Therefore not till that request to deliver up the papers was sprung like a mine upon him, had he the least suspicion of any interference in his plans. Now, what could he do? To give up the thirty thousand, when he had such sore need of it, and take but fifteen, was a severe blow. He must at least make a little fight for it.

Looking up with a sneer he said, "I was not aware that Mrs. Fuller had the honor of your friendship."

"She has, sir, and my highest esteem. One of the most sincere regrets of my life is, that I was not at home when John Fuller, called upon me for help. Now, sir, I stand ready to act for her."

Hunt's cheek blanched in spite of himself, as he met Mr. Butler's stern glance.

It was very evident that he had more knowledge than it was at all comfortable for him to possess. He was an antagonist too dangerous for Hunt to rouse to open warfare. So turning carelessly to the secretary, and drawing out his cigars, he offered one to Mr. Butler, and said, "I do not keep papers of that nature up here. Of course I only wanted to get back my own, therefore, after long delay, was obliged to foreclose. If you will come to my

office at the bank to-morrow, I shall be happy to transact that little business with you. I presume Mrs. Fuller is prepared to pay the costs of foreclosure, etc?"

"Certainly, sir; everything shall be paid in full at ten o'clock to-morrow. Excuse me, I'll not smoke to-night. Good-evening."

After he left, Hunt locked the door and lighting his cigar sat down to think what he should do in this new phase of affairs. It was a very serious blow to his schemes, and moreover revealed to him that he had gained the suspicion and anger of one of the most honorable and influential men of that region.

A breath of distrust thrown upon his management of the Oquago Bank now, would draw that man's scrutiny, and bring about investigations of which he did not dare to think. What should he do? Conscience said, "Retrace your steps while you can. Honesty is the best policy. If you keep on it may be too late."


But looking at the other side of the question, he found that downward steps are not easy to retrace. And then Stokes had so thoroughly convinced him that this last venture was going to prove a wonderful success. Two or three weeks' more careful, skillful work, would place them both safe, among the rich men of the land. Then he could afford to laugh at such paltry losses as fifteen thousand dol-

lars. Everything but this was working favorably. Stokes was desperately in love with Ada ; and Hunt had made him feel that his best chance to win her was to serve him faithfully, and make money himself, as that would give him the position to which she had been accustomed. Hunt had now convinced himself that the very best thing Ada could do would be to marry Stokes. He knew that he could not tell her this, for he saw that she was playing her part with Stokes merely to help him, and he must keep up her delusion till he had secured Julia. He thought that she would console herself with Stokes, when she found that his wealth could give her every luxury, if nothing more. He had strong hopes of Julia from her gracious manner toward him that night. If he could only get Graham out of the way for a little ! Perhaps Gordon might be persuaded to send him to Philadelphia, to consult with his uncle, on the feasibility of making some compromise with the miners, or bringing new hands to start up the works. Fortunately Mr. Butler was not a director of their bank, or even a depositor ; and he hoped to keep his credit secure till these plans were consummated. The first thing in the morning, he must write to that firm in Western New York, that the property they thought of purchasing was no longer in the market.

He had often played a risky game. This was a little more involved, but he would be a fool to give up now, when there were still so many moves left. No! Mr. Butler had not checkmated him yet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PLOTS AND COUNTER-PLOTS.

UNT came down earlier than usual the next morning, intending to get to town in time to dispatch some letters by the first mail. Ada overheard him giving orders for his breakfast the night before, and resolved to pour out his coffee and have a little private conversation at the same time. So when he entered the breakfast room, she very soon joined him. He was surprised and gratified to see her, and, suspecting that she had come to talk about Stokes, determined to make all smooth and safe there.

Dismissing the servant, he laid his hand lightly on her shoulder, and stooping, kissed her cheek, saying, "Cousins have privileges, you know."

"Some cousins are inclined to take more than their share," she replied, as she blushed under his caress.

"That does not apply to me. I felt last night as if I were being defrauded. Mr. Stokes is becoming wonderfully devoted."

"How could you tell, when you were flirting so desperately with Julia?"

“Not so desperately but that I could watch you.”

“Well, Hal, you know I am only following out your wishes ; and that’s what I have come to talk to you about. That man is very presuming and unmanageable. You said that you couldn’t recommend him—that he was only a vulgar, shoddy, army contractor during the war. Now how much longer do you want me to put up with his insolent attentions, for such I consider them. If it weren’t for your sake, I’d never see his face again. He tried to kiss me last night.”

“Really, I can scarcely blame him. It was such a strong temptation. It was Miss Earle called him an army contractor. Very probably he was. Ada, you have been so good to me in this matter, I hardly know how to thank you. But in order completely to accomplish my plans, I fear I will have to beg of you to keep up this delusion a little longer. You certainly are skillful enough to hold him in check for two or three weeks. Just as soon as these matters he now has in charge are brought to a successful termination, as I am sure they will be, you may give him the mitten whenever you please, unless you think better of it. He will be a rich man. You might do worse.”

“Oh ! Hal, you know I want something beside money in the man I marry.”

“That may be, but he would need to have con-

siderable to keep you as you would like. I hope before another six months have passed to be in a position to marry, and give my wife a home worthy of her."

Ada had no doubt that she would be that enviable person. A deep, rich color dyed her cheeks, and her eyes sparkled under the long half-drooping lashes. Hunt looked at her, and almost wished that he could make her his choice. But as it is with most men, and with him especially, the knowledge that he had only to speak the word to obtain her love, made him indifferent to it. Julia, beside her wealth, had now by her uncertain actions caused him to be more eager in his pursuit, although she had not a tithe of Ada's attractiveness.

Still, Hunt knew what a dangerous enemy Ada would make, if her jealousy were aroused before he was in a position to act independently of both her and Stokes.

Therefore, he brought his utmost skill and fascinating arts to bear in his efforts to convince her that he was only amusing himself with Julia, as a blind to Stokes, and how important it was that he should believe that Hunt was pleading his cause, and that her acceptance was only a matter of delay, or reluctance to give up her freedom.

When Hunt left for town, he felt that morning's interview to be not a bad beginning of his day's

work. And yet he had proved the truth of the text, "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands;" for the glass door stood partly open that led into the library, and there within hearing sat the man who was the subject of their conversation. They did not know that he was habitually an early riser, and supposed when they dismissed the servant that there were no others on that floor.

When Stokes recognized the voice of the speakers he had no scruples in listening. But when he found that they were about to rise, he left the room by another door, and neither of them suspected that their words had been overheard, nor the counter-plots that were then laid to bring upon them a bitter retribution.

When Stokes met Ada at the usual breakfast hour, his manner was as devoted as on the previous evening. After they left the table, he requested to see her alone in the library. She rose with a gracious smile, and as her queenly form swept by him when he held open the door, he muttered to himself, "Ah! my gentle lady, you think now you are going to pull the wool over Bill Stokes's eyes. But 'it's the early bird that catches the worm,' and Hunt is the worm that I'll grind in the dust. You are a wise little serpent, but so beautiful that I'll rob you gently of your sting, and make you my pet and plaything."

Ada felt nervous and uneasy. There was an expression in the man's eyes bent upon her that she could not read. But her real timidity made her counterfeit of the bashful maiden more complete.

"Miss Hunt," he said, in tones that were calm from their intensity of passion, "you are aware that I have but one object in seeking this interview. Loving you as I do, you must know that the strongest desire of my heart is to make you my wife. I may be precipitate in this announcement. I am not much accustomed to the fine phrases by which courtiers woo fair ladies, but I have begged your cousin, who seems so favorable to my cause, to plead in my behalf. May I hope that his words, if not my devotion, have won me a favorable answer?"

The long lashes drooped over Ada's eyes, as she replied, "Mr. Stokes, you pay me a great honor. I acknowledge that my cousin Henry has spoken favorably of your merits. But excuse me, if I say that you seem as yet comparatively a stranger. One can hardly accept such an offer, till they feel sure they can 'love, honor, and obey.' Isn't that the way the promise runs?" she asked, looking up suddenly with one of her bewitching smiles.

"Then may I hope that your acceptance is only a question of time, and that when I come again, I may put the diamond on your finger?"

"At least, Mr. Stokes, give me this time to con-

sider the subject. I know that you are too noble and worthy a man to be content with the hand without the heart."

"Certainly, Miss Hunt. But I have strong confidence that within two months you will be able to give me both. And in June, the bridal month, this house will witness a double wedding—that of your cousin, Mr. Hunt, with Miss Earle, and ourselves."

Ada's eyes flashed, while her cheek blanched as she said, "Mr. Stokes, I think you are taking too much for granted."

"Pardon me, I may be in reference to yourself, but certainly not in the former case. I have Mr. Hunt's own words that those are his intentions. And as his actions speak so plainly to the same point, I cannot imagine that Miss Earle will long be proof against his strong attractions. I feel flattered that you have been so absorbed with your own conflicting feelings as not to notice what is so evident to others."

As Stokes said this his cold gray eyes held hers in a fixed gaze. Anger and passionate jealousy were raging in her heart, though her iron will held them in control. But Stokes knew that his shaft had struck home, as her color came and went with fearful rapidity, and she did not dare trust herself to speak. Still keeping his eyes fixed upon her, he continued: "You remarked that you wished to be-

come better acquainted with me. I regret to say that business will keep me confined to New York for several weeks to come ; I hope by that time to lay a fortune at your feet, which would give you every luxury heart could wish. Meanwhile I can surely have the privilege of writing from day to day, and hoping sometimes for a gracious reply ? ”

He took her hand, which was cold and passive, and coming still closer, said : “ A jealous man, Miss Ada, does not always see clearly ; but I imagined once, that you had formed an unfortunate attachment for your cousin. I most honestly trust that I was mistaken, for he cannot afford to marry a poor girl. Good-bye ; I shall hope for a more favorable reception when we meet again.”

And, dropping her hand, he left the room. Ada sat perfectly still till she knew he was out of the house, then she flew to her room, and crouching down on the floor, gave herself up to a passionate burst of feeling.

“ How dare he speak to me so ! ” she cried, clenching her hands. “ Yet I fear it is true, and that Henry has been deceiving me all this time. Is it possible that I, who have only seen this man a dozen times, have betrayed my weakness to him ? Poor fool that I am ; I would rather die than marry him. Yet suppose Henry does marry Julia ; what is to become of me ? She hates me as sincerely as I do her. Shall I live on their bounty, or go on

cuddling to his old mother's tyrannical whims? No, I'd better marry Stokes. I would at least get money and a home. I don't believe what Stokes said, though, after Hal's talk and manner this morning. Yet I know he's ambitious. He would sacrifice me or anything that would serve his interest. I'll watch him now, day and night. No lynx was ever sharper than I will be. Perhaps I had better keep it an open question with Stokes; he may prove a last resort. A poor girl, dependent on her rich relations, is in a miserably weak condition."

She was not a woman to give way long to unavailing tears, but rose, dried her eyes, and sat down calmly to review the whole situation.

As Mr. Stokes was about to enter the private room at the Oquago Bank, he saw Hunt handing the cashier the check for fifteen thousand, that Butler had that morning paid him, and overheard the latter say: "I thought you intended to take possession of that property and sell it for thirty."

"Old Butler spoiled that little plan," replied Hunt, carelessly. "I am sorry, but it won't make much difference in the end. Don't worry, we'll be out of the woods in a few weeks."

"Ah! Stokes," he exclaimed, as he saw him in the doorway; "I hope you will excuse my want of ceremony this morning. I thought probably you might not be in a hurry to leave, and my time

was precious. 'It's the early bird that catches the worm,' you know."

"Yes, I've found out the truth of that proverb," answered Stokes, with a sinister smile that Hunt did not notice. "But what have you caught?"

"Only fifteen thousand," said Hunt, with a short laugh. "Here is the morning paper; I have to go out on the street for an hour. Will you amuse yourself till I return? I want to talk over matters pretty freely before you leave for New York."

"That is not a bad haul in these times. Don't hurry; I'll wait."

After Hunt went out, Stokes called in the cashier, and knowing that he had invested money in their present venture, began giving a glowing description of their prospects of success, and by skillful questions drew from him nearly the whole history of Hunt's position with the bank, as he supposed that Stokes was fully in Hunt's confidence. When Hunt returned, Stokes looked up over his paper and said quietly, "I had an audience with Miss Ada, this morning."

"Indeed! I hope you were favorably received."

"As much so as I could hope. I think it only a question of time, as in your case with Miss Earle. Or is that an acknowledged fact? By the way, I took it for granted, and the other day, when one of those old brokers on Wall Street was doubting

your ability to carry so much of this stock, as your coal business was at a dead-lock, I told him that you had made largely in oil a few years ago, and as you were expecting soon to marry the other heiress, Miss Earle, both the rich uncles might be backing you up. I saw that shot told, and it helped us even more than I hoped."

"Capital! Stokes. You couldn't have made a better hit. Though I have not yet secured my bird, all things look favorable. She is shy, as you will find Ada, but there is some excitement in the pursuit, if they don't stoop too readily to your lure. Believe me, old fellow, I will do all I can to advance your cause. I am a sort of guardian, at least of what little property she has. I suppose you know she is not rich?"

"That is no objection with me. I am not such a mercenary boy as you are. How you could turn from her to such a little chit as that Miss Earle, I can't understand."

Hunt's face flushed under Stokes's keen gaze, as he replied carelessly, "It is well we don't all think alike, and, to own the truth, I can't afford to marry a poor girl."

Stokes fully believed that last clause. "But come," continued Hunt; "we must not let these fascinating creatures absorb all our thoughts, or business will suffer."

During the conversation that followed, Hunt

spoke freely of their plans and prospects, and when he parted with Stokes, felt that he could not have placed his affairs in the hands of a man more bound by every consideration to serve his interests, or more capable of doing it.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NARROW ESCAPE.



WHEN Mr. Butler returned home, having completed his business with Hunt, it was his intention to visit Andrew Fuller on the mountain at once, and relieve his mind from anxiety about his mother and their future prospects. But a cold, disagreeable change in the weather convinced him that further exposure might prove dangerous to his weak lungs, and he reluctantly yielded to his wife's persuasions to let Graham bear the good tidings to Fuller.

Before Graham left the house, he stepped into the nursery where Grace and Julia were seated, and said to the former, "I find that I shall have to forego the pleasure of attending that concert with you, ladies, to-night. There is so much turbulence among the miners that Malcome is obliged to remain at the colliery at night to keep all things safe, and I have promised to take care of poor Fuller. They have moved him to Malcome's cottage, and I hope that he will be benefited by the change."

Graham addressed his regrets to Grace, but looked at Julia as if anxious that she should understand that it was only a stern necessity that kept him from fulfilling his previous engagement. Julia was playing with her little nephew in the window-seat, and turning stood looking out as if she had not heard his words.

As she watched him drive away she said to herself, "It is easy to tell what makes the call of duty so strong at Malcome's cottage. No doubt, Annie Malcome will help him keep watch. Why else should this Fuller possess so strong a claim upon him, that he must needs give up an engagement made a week ago? I don't doubt that dozens of nurses could be obtained for one night. I can't understand how a man of Graham's education and refinement could become attached to a girl in that class. But if he does like her, why not come out fairly and honestly and say so? Why try to cover his actions in that clandestine fashion? Perhaps he thinks that it will hurt his position here. I was goose enough to believe, the night of the flood, that he really ran some risk for my sake. Now I see that it was to ingratiate himself in Mr. and Mrs. Butler's good graces, and he is still pretending to serve Mr. Butler in caring for Fuller, when it suits his own pleasure so well. I laughed at the idea when Lizzie Jones, soon after I got her a place at Mrs. Butler's, told me that it was the general report

among the miners that Mr. Graham was Annie Malcome's sweetheart, and that is why he was so interested in their Sunday-school.

"I believe that these men are all alike. There's not one that you can feel sure does not act from interested motives. If Mr. Hunt asks me to go with him to-night, I shall accept. It looks so stormy that Grace and Ada won't go. But one can't be moping in the house all the time, and there is some excitement in his attentions. He seems about as aboveboard and honorable as the average, and he is certainly very handsome and agreeable. I don't know but on the whole I had better accept him as a permanency."

But as Julia sat busy with her needle, by a strange persistency her thoughts kept reverting to the experiences of Easter Sunday and the night of the flood. Then came tantalizing pictures of Graham and Annie sitting together in the cheerful little room where she had first seen her. The other accessories of the picture, the sick man and blind mother, did not enter her vision. Yet if any one had suggested it, she would have scorned the thought that Graham had the power to arouse her jealousy. She was disappointed in him. He had seemed such a fine character, yet here she had discovered him pretending to one motive when he was actuated by another.

At dinner Hunt asked how many were going to

the concert that night? Julia immediately declared herself ready. Grace expostulated, and said that it was beginning to storm. She and Frank would not go, and Ada had been complaining of a cold and ought not to venture.

"That is no reason why Miss Earle and I should remain at home," replied Hunt; "in a close carriage, we will not be exposed."

Here was an opportunity to press his suit with Julia that he was resolved not to lose, as she showed no reluctance to accompany him. Mr. and Mrs. Butler felt very uneasy. Both had become strongly attached to Julia, and they could not bear to see her fall into the toils of a man they felt so utterly unprincipled as Hunt; yet in what way could they prove to her how unworthy he was? It was therefore a relief when they heard Ada say, "I intend to go to-night, unless Henry feels that the care of two ladies is more than he can undertake, or that I shall be *de trop*. I am very anxious to hear this concert, and if we ride in a close carriage there need be no risk."

Hunt was exceedingly vexed, but seeing a look in Ada's eyes that showed that her jealousy was fully aroused, he did not dare provoke it further. So in his usual light fashion he replied, "Surely Ada, you ought to know that my gallantry is equal to all demands. I do not think you will be exposed. Of course you are the best judge of what is prudent."

"Come, Ada, go by all means. I shall not unless you do," said Julia, who longed for the change and excitement, yet when it came to a decision did not care to venture alone with Hunt. He saw that there was no use remonstrating, and that he must wait a more favorable opportunity. He had set himself a very difficult task, that of courting one young lady while he kept up the impression with another in the same house that he really loved her, and that his attentions to her rival were a blind only to his real sentiments. But he was a natural courtier, and each girl thought by the time they returned home, that she was the one he was seeking to win.

As Ada watched Julia enter her room, she congratulated herself on having out-maneuvered her that time ; and as she recalled the compliments Hunt had paid to her appearance, and the undisguised admiration that had greeted her on all sides, she could not believe that he would turn from her to such an insignificant rival, especially as she was helping him to gain the wealth he was so ambitious to secure. But she was made conscious, by symptoms of a violent cold, that she had gained her advantage that night at a very imprudent risk.

Julia felt thirsty, and finding no ice-water in her room, went down to the dining-room. Hunt had not yet retired, and followed her, saying : "Miss Julia, it is early yet ; won't you sit down here by

the fire and have a little talk? It is so seldom one can get a chance to say a word, without an audience to condemn or applaud, the house is so full now."

"Do you suppose that I will listen if neither of those privileges are granted me?"

"Surely you won't condemn me," said Hunt, approaching the side-board where she still stood. "I was sorely disappointed that we couldn't go alone to the concert. Ada was more *de trop* than she could imagine. I had much that I wanted to say to you; now I hardly know how to put it into words."

He paused a moment and looked at her steadily, as, with drooping eyes and flushed face, half averted, she stood near the door.

"I have secured her now," he thought; "I have only to speak the talismanic word, and the golden treasure will drop into my grasp."

Julia's thoughts were rapid, too. Suspecting what the next sentence might be, she said to herself: "I don't know but I had better say yes. All the ladies, and gentlemen also, at the concert to-night seemed eager to gain his attention. It would please Grace and Frank, and make Ada furious; she is so vain of her beauty, and sure of her cousin's love." Then suddenly she seemed to be standing on Mr. Butler's balcony, with Graham holding her hand as she looked down on

the black water and grinding ice. But again the thought stung her that he was even then with the woman he loved. He had never cared for her.

How the struggle would have ended was left an unsolved problem, for Mr. Butler, fearing mischief, had remained up. Sitting in the library, he had witnessed this scene through the glass door, and felt it time to make a diversion. So he rose from his chair with considerable noise, and stepped into the hall. Julia instantly turned and met him, saying: "O, Mr. Butler! you don't know what you missed. The concert was very fine, and all the *crème de la crème* were there."

"I don't doubt, my dear, that I enjoyed my cigar in the library still more, and I always preferred buttermilk to cream. The latter seems slippery, and often proves sour when you expect it sweet."

Julia laughed, as running up stairs, she called back, "Good-night, gentlemen. Mr. Butler, you are worse than Diogenes in his tub."

"Confound the man," muttered Hunt. "I would like to kick him out of the house."

"I checkmated him that time," chuckled Butler as he followed Julia.

When Graham told Fuller what Mr. Butler, had done for him, he could hardly find words to express his relief and gratitude.

"Mother often used to want us to seek his help,"

he said, "but I always felt with father, that it would be still more humiliating and of no advantage. Now, if my life is spared, I shall show him that I know how to appreciate his kindness, and shall strain every nerve to pay the interest, till I can return the principal."

"You see, Fuller, you have let your prejudices keep from you all this time the good offices of a true friend. Judging by your manner, I have been led to think that in some way, I have gained your dislike also. I am not conscious of having injured you, and although I cannot prove so valuable a friend, I am certainly as sincere. You are too sensible a man to include me in your just aversion to Hunt."

Fuller had watched very closely the greeting between Annie and Graham; she was prepared then, and their friendly, unembarrassed manner convinced Fuller that he had misjudged both, and that it would be better frankly to tell Graham his real reason.

"Mr. Graham," he replied, "I believe you are right, and I am now ashamed of my suspicions. I don't know that you are aware that I have been for some time paying attention to Miss Annie. Not prospering in my suit, I gave credit to a report that you were my successful rival, and, moreover, I believed you capable of trifling with her love. A jealous man is seldom just, and now I am convinced

that I had no ground for my dislike, and I beg your pardon for my surly conduct in the past."

"You certainly did great injustice to us both. Miss Malcome and I are true friends, but nothing more I assure you. I believe once Bridget Maguire asked, how my swate-heart, Miss Annie, was? But I did not imagine that any one else gave credence to such fancies. However, as you say, a man looking through green spectacles must be excused, if he don't see clearly, and with my best wishes for your success take this old advice, 'Faint heart never won fair lady.'"

Hearing a tap at the door, Graham went to it, and admitting Annie with Fuller's tea quietly stepped into the next room. Fuller seeing that they were alone took her hand, as she came up to his bed, saying: "Miss Annie, you showed so much sympathy for me in my trouble that I know you will rejoice when you hear the good news Mr. Graham has brought me."

After relating what Mr. Butler had done, he said with deep feeling: "Now, I can truly thank God for sparing my life, and I hope to prove to all my friends that I am not ungrateful."

"O Andrew! I am so glad. You couldn't have a truer friend than Mr. Butler."

"Yes, there is no bitterness now in being under obligation to him. I shall pay him back the money if I get my health again, but I shall never forget

how opportunely and kindly the help came. There is only one wish of my heart ungratified. Dear Annie, do you think it will ever come?"


Annie's face flushed scarlet as Fuller pressed her hand to his lips, before she could draw it away. He did not urge an answer, but the gentle manner with which she finished her arrangements for his comfort made him feel that she was not seriously offended. She left the room by another door, as Graham entered.

Fuller began questioning him about the miners, but Graham refused to answer, saying that "he had talked enough, and must go to sleep, or at least make the attempt."

Fuller insisted that that was impossible, but before an hour passed, he sank into the first quiet slumber he had enjoyed since the accident.

CHAPTER XX.

FRESH DANGERS THREATEN.

ARLY that evening Ned Malcome made all things safe about the breaker, having procured an extra police force, as he had been warned that a party of raiders were threatening to drive off the pump-men.

As night came on, dark with a driving snow-storm, he made a fire in his little office and settled himself before it, with his book, to while away the long hours. He had been seated but a short time when there came a low tap at his door. Rising and taking his loaded pistol, he cautiously opened it, and saw to his surprise Bessie Walker and her brother, a lad of fifteen, standing before him.

He was about to speak, but placing her finger on her lips, they stepped quickly in, and telling him to lock the door and drop the shade over the window, she threw back her wet cloak and said, "Don't be alarmed, Ned. You are not in danger this time. But some one else is. I did not dare write, and Jack was willing to come with me. No one must know that I am here."

"Dear Bessie," he exclaimed, as he drew her up to the fire, "am I never to see you, except when danger threatens? It has been a bitter struggle to keep away from you all these weeks; and now I can hardly believe that it is anything more than your wraith that has come to nestle so close to my heart this wild, stormy night. Speak to me, darling. Is it any danger that threatens you?"

"O Malcome! I have been so distressed, so perplexed as to what I ought to do," cried Bessie, bursting into tears. Malcome soothed her with a lover's caresses and when she regained self-control seated her in a camp-chair, saying, "There, Jack, is another for you. I will make a cup of tea to warm you after this long cold walk. Then you can tell me all, and if it is in human power to help, you may be sure I will do my utmost." But suddenly pausing and turning quickly, he asked, "You haven't consented to marry Bill McQuaid, Bessie?"

"Oh no, Ned; I would die first. It is not that; we are all to be turned out on the street, and father will lose what little he has, or crime will be committed. It is this last danger especially, that brings me here."

"Whom does it threaten?"

"Mr. Hunt. Sit down and listen. We have no time for tea, some one may come. As I said, no one must know I'm here. To understand, you must hear the whole story. It is a plot to be car-

ried out next week, but I could not tell when I could get a better chance to see you."

"You are a brave, noble girl to run all this risk to save him. But as you say, I must hear all, to comprehend how he is involved."

"Honestly, Ned, I must acknowledge that I didn't come here for his sake," she answered, as her eyes fell beneath his loving gaze; but lifting them instantly, with a flash of anger, she continued, "I believe that he deserves punishment, and if it wasn't for the consequence to others, I'd leave him to his fate. I don't suppose you know, that several years ago he induced father, with some other depositors in the Oquago Bank, to take shares in a railroad of which he was a director. He sold out all his to them, when he knew it was worthless. Of course father lost what he put in. He had a note for two thousand in the bank, which came due, and not being able to meet it, Mr. Hunt took a mortgage for that amount on our store. Since the strike it has been very hard to raise the interest. The time was up, and Mr. Hunt told father that he must have the money or foreclose. Father has been trying his best to raise it somehow, or sell his place for anything like what he ought to get; but you know every one is pressed, and money is not to be had. He begged uncle Sam to help him. He has no family, and is benefited by the strike, while poor father only loses. But uncle Sam said he

couldn't and wouldn't help him that way. Hunt had played this cheating game long enough, and it was time they had their revenge. I heard him say that, and last night when I saw Bill McQuaid and some other roughs in the store, I suspected that mischief was plotting, and that father, feeling so desperate, might be drawn in.

"They usually go to talk in a place behind the store, where empty barrels are kept. I crept into the loft overhead, and removing the tin cover from an old pipe-hole, crouched down by it, and heard all that was said.

"Three or four men besides McQuaid, Uncle Sam, and father were there. One they called Harris, a bad, dissipated fellow, told with awful oaths how Hunt had ruined him, and got hold of his father-in-law, old John Fuller's property, and driven the old man to drown himself. He said that most people thought his death was an accident. But he had met him by his mill the night of the flood, and when he asked him for a little help saying he had had nothing to eat or drink all day, old Fuller talked like a crazy man, and said, that he and Hunt had driven him to despair; that the next day they would all be without anything to eat and drink, or any cover for their heads. He wouldn't live to see it, but they were his murderers; and with that as the ice crashed against the old mill, tearing it away, Fuller sprang with a fearful

cry right into the midst, and he saw his body whirled around, and tossed over and over with the ice. O Ned, as he described it, I could hardly keep from screaming. Then with another terrible oath he said, 'I was an honest, sober man, till Hunt dazzled me with visions of becoming rich, without hard steady work. Now I'm a miserable wretch, who would sell his soul for a dram. But true as Gospel, Hunt murdered the old man ! Let us have revenge.'

"Uncle Sam then told how he had heard that Hunt was going to bring men from elsewhere to start up the mines, and if the resident miners didn't go to work by the first of May, every one would be turned out of their houses.

"Bill McQuaid was in favor of a sudden attack upon Hunt. He said that there were business meetings next week, which would keep Hunt in town till late in the evening. The nights would be dark. A quantity of ice was still left by the side of the way. It was a lonely road and five or six men could secrete themselves there and shoot at him as he rode by, then escape to the woods, before any one could come to the rescue. He believed that with Hunt out of the way, they could bring Gordon to terms.

"Uncle Sam thought well of the plan, but father tried to oppose it, and said that he did not see how this would help him ; Mr. Gordon would take

it up, and suspicion fasten right on him and Uncle Sam.

'But the others urged that it could be done, and no evidence could be brought against any one. Mr. Gordon was a timid man, and would be too frightened to act promptly.

"Uncle Sam agreed, and urged that this act would give them time to get help from elsewhere. They had been executing justice upon offending 'black-legs.' It was time now for the real tyrants to feel their power to avenge wrongs. Many of the miners were becoming anxious to go to work at the reduction, and if they saw their places likely to be filled by outsiders, they would submit in such numbers that resistance would be over, and the long strike of no use after all. The welfare of the majority demanded that this effort should be made. Neither he nor father need know who fired the shots, or when the attack was made, and if questioned, they could swear that they were ignorant.

"After a good deal more talk, the plot was laid for the first dark night next week that he comes home late. I got permission of mother to spend to-night with Ella Peterson near here. Jack was good enough to steal away and come with me.

"Now, what can we do? I am afraid to have you give warning to Mr. Hunt, for it may turn their revenge on you. Father don't want to do this, but you see, he is driven to desperation. He

has been going around pale as a ghost to-day, and so cross that we didn't dare speak to him."

Malcome leaned forward and looked steadily in the fire for some time, then said, "Bessie, I see only one way out of this trouble. Two wrongs never make a right. Though, as you say, Hunt really deserves punishment, yet these acts of violence among the worst class of miners only bring disgrace and additional suffering upon those who are struggling honestly for justice and an honorable self-support. I will tell you what I can do. I have a little over two thousand dollars deposited in the savings bank. I will give you a check for the amount your father needs. You can give it to him and say that I will trust him till he can pay me back.

"It was the little hoard I was saving to enable me to support my wife, but, Bessie, this use of it may do more to bring us together in the end. If my life and health is spared, I can make a comfortable living for those dependent on me. If your father makes any difficulties about accepting this, tell him that we both know of the plot, and will expose them. He can free himself from Hunt, and give him warning of the danger, anonymously if he chooses, for I don't believe that he could prevent the attack, if they had a chance."

"O Ned! I can't bear to take your hard earnings. It doesn't seem right."

"Dearie," he whispered, stooping down and kiss-

ing her trembling lips; "you know the money was made for you. It can only be used as will serve you best."

Malcome thought that the eloquent thanks that were expressed in the soft brown eyes lifted to his, were worth a million dollars, if he had it to give.

But springing up, she exclaimed, "Father cannot prove ungrateful to such generosity. Ned, I must go. It will be easy walking back, I won't have such a heavy heart to carry. I couldn't endure the thought that father should be led into this crime. He has been unjust to you, but, dear Malcome, it was all Uncle Sam's fault. Now I hope father will believe me, when I say that he is a deep, designing man, pretending to serve father and the poor miners, when he only cares for his own position and influence. He and Mr. Hunt are twin brothers in character, and I would like to see them both get their deserts."

"They will get it some time, Bessie. I understand your father's position; it is that which has held me back more than anything else. I am a determined Scotchman, as you know, and but mortal in my temper. I knew that if your father or Uncle Sam taunted me as a 'black-leg,' there might be bitter words, if nothing more. I knew that I could trust to your fidelity and love in these dark days, and if the bright ones ever came, our patience and forbearance would cause us no regret. I don't


know how to let you go out in this storm alone," he added, taking his bank-book and writing the check.

"Oh! don't worry about that. Jack is a faithful little brother. He shall bring you word to-morrow of my failure or success. But, Malcome, I must go."

Releasing her from his arms, with a sigh, he watched her and her brother glide away, like dark shadows over the snow, the falling flakes fast covering their tracks.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNMASKED.

HEN Graham returned to Cedar Ridge the next day to give his report, he went directly to Mr. Butler's room, and found Julia sitting there, having a merry chat with the old gentleman.

"Did you attend the concert last night, Miss Earle?" he asked, after the morning salutations had passed.

"Yes, Mr. Hunt was kind enough to act as escort," she replied coldly.

Graham looked very sober, as he turned to Mr. Butler, and told of Fuller's appreciation of the kindness shown him, and his determination as soon as possible to pay interest, till he could return the principal.

"How is he now? Will he be about soon?"

"It will be some weeks, sir, before he can walk. But with a relieved mind, and Annie Malcome's good care, I don't think there is any further cause for anxiety on his account."

Julia was pretending to listen to Mrs. Butler's

directions about her knitting, but was in fact all attention to the low conversation the other side of the room.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "I have heard that Fuller was quite interested there. That would be a capital match. Does the lady smile upon him?"

"Well, sir, I've not seen them together, for last night when she came in the room I stepped out. I fancied that Fuller had told her of his trouble and might like to let her know how you had relieved him. I think the signs are propitious."

"But what could her blind mother do without her?"

"Oh! Malcome will soon bring his wife home. I suppose you know who Bessie Walker is?"

"Yes, and by-the-by, I heard a report that Hunt had got her father in a tight place too."

"Oh, I hope not! But I must be off to the breakers. Mr. Gordon left word that he would be there by noon, and wanted to see me. It is nearly that now."

Julia sprang up with sparkling eyes, and approaching Graham, asked: "Is there anything that I can do for the sick man's comfort?"

"Nothing now, Miss Julia," he replied, surprised at the sudden change in her manner. "Oh, I nearly forgot a little rosebud Mary Malone picked for you. I stopped there a moment this morning, and she

said that it was the first on the bush you gave her, but that three more were coming."

He took it from his pocket, and carefully unwrapping the cotton about it, presented it with a smile that so changed his face, that Julia thought he did not look like the same man who was talking to Mr. Butler a moment before.

"Thank you," she said, "I will put it in water at once; to-night you will see it fairly open." And she gave him an equally-bright smile, as he passed out. As soon as he was gone, she turned sharply on Mr. Butler, and asked, "What has Mr. Hunt done?"

"My child, after what I happened to see last night, I am not sure but if I tell you, you will be seriously offended?"

"With him or you, sir?"

"With me. A girl does not like to hear ill of her lover."

"He is not my lover yet, so I insist that you tell me what wrong he has done."

"Yes, Julia, I said to my husband that it would not be right for us to leave here without warning you against him," said Mrs. Butler.

"But what has he done?" cried Julia impatiently tapping the floor with her little slipper.

"Driven a poor old man, when Hunt himself had been the means of involving him, to suicide, by cruel pressure upon him, when he knew he was

helpless. And if I hadn't happened to have discovered his deviltry, old Mrs. Fuller, and her helpless family would to-day have been turned out of doors, without shelter or money to procure it," said Mr. Butler sternly.

"What! in this driving storm? O Mr. Butler! what did you do?"

Butler hesitated a moment, as he looked out at the whirling drifts. But his wife, with a proud, loving gaze, replied, "He went to see Mrs. Fuller that dark night, as soon as he heard of Andrew's accident, almost at the risk of his life, and then paid Mr. Hunt's mortgage. So that now they are relieved and taken care of till Andrew recovers."

"But why did you pay him?" asked Julia indignantly of Mr. Butler.

"To save Mrs. Fuller, who was my old childhood's friend."

"But he deserves to be denounced as a murderer. I would have proclaimed his villainy to the world. Yet for all I can see, you treat him with the same courtesy you did a week ago. Really, Mr. Butler, I did not think you would seek to cover up, or submit to let a criminal act go unpunished, no matter what the man's position."

"Hold! hold! little lady. You go off like nitro-glycerine. Suppose I couldn't prove anything against him?"

"Why! isn't this true that you have told me, and don't you call it a crime?"

"Morally, yes. But, legally, he had the right to foreclose. I have no proof that he cheated either Fuller's son-in-law, or the old man. There are plenty of ways by which a sharp speculator can involve the unwary, and make money while they lose, yet keep within the limits of the law. I did the only thing I could under the circumstances. But Hunt knows that he has a dangerous enemy on his track now. And if he attempts any open rascality, he'll find I will be first to bring the penalty upon him."

"Excuse me, Mr. Butler. I see that, as usual, I was too hasty. But this you have said confirms suspicions I had some time ago of Mr. Hunt and his connection with that Mr. Stokes. I believe he is planning something now with that man, who is even more unscrupulous than he."

"I am ashamed to think I ever listened to his flattery," she continued, looking up frankly, though her face was covered with blushes. "You did me a kind office last night, Mr. Butler, by your timely appearance. I don't know into what foolishness I might not have been drawn."

"My dear child!" said Mrs. Butler, gently stroking her burning cheeks. "It was just that we were afraid of. I believe he is an unprincipled fortune hunter."

"That's what I once called him to Grace. But she said that she was ashamed of me, for imputing such sordid motives to an honorable gentleman, and that I was always imagining that it was the heiress men were seeking."

"Miss Julia," said Butler, "the fact of your wealth may hold back a true man who really loves you, from fear of that imputation, but never a professed fortune-hunter. My advice is when you see a gentleman whose conduct to others as well as yourself is such as you can admire and respect, give him encouragement to believe you care more for worth than wealth."

"But it isn't leap-year yet, Mr. Butler. What would you have me do?"

"Don't trifle with a good man, and be careful how you give the opposite opportunities for midnight interviews."

"Thank you. I'll not favor Mr. Hunt again, unless I know you are by on guard. Then if he asks my opinion of him, it might relieve my mind to be able to express it."

"I have no doubt you would make sharp use of your woman's weapon. But, unless he presses himself upon you, I should prefer a dignified avoidance. With regard to what I have told you, say nothing, even to Grace. It is the general belief that John Fuller's death was accidental. For his children's sake, it is better that impression

should remain. They are out of Hunt's hands now. I think he is too cautious a man to go beyond the limits of the law. But he can be very hard and grinding upon those in his power. I shall make further inquiries about Walker."

Here he was interrupted by Grace, who came in pale and agitated, saying that her little boy, who had been complaining all night, was then lying in convulsions, and that Ada Hunt, also, was very ill. She had sent for the doctor, but baby Frank might die before he arrived.

Grace was so terrified that she was perfectly helpless. But an emergency of any kind always called out Julia's dormant strength and energy. So, guided by Mrs. Butler's experience, she did everything possible to relieve her little nephew, before the doctor came. He brought additional anxiety, when, after seeing the patients, he informed them that a malignant form of scarlet fever had entered their midst, and that the baby and Ada were its first victims.

As Julia saw Ada's beautiful face burning with fever, her eyes moving wildly about and lips muttering strange fancies, she shuddered as she thought that she might be the next victim. During that time of dreadful suspense, she seemed to be walking on the shore of eternity, where the quicksands might at any time sink beneath her, letting her down into the fathomless abyss. She avoided no

duty or danger, but, for the first time, her heart really went out in an earnest cry for the only help that could avail in that trying hour.

Alas! there are few homes that fell-destroyer has not some time invaded, selecting the fairest and dearest of the flock. We have felt our hearts sink and courage fail, as through long days and nights we fought the disease, hour by hour; too often, to watch the shadow of death steal on, till the light of their eyes was quenched, and the loved forms hid in the darkness of the grave.

It was nearly dark, when going through the hall from Ada's room to the nursery, Julia met Graham, with overcoat and traveling-bag.

Dropping them he said, "I was looking for you. I felt that I must see you before I left.

"Are you going to leave us now?" she asked reproachfully.

"Oh, Miss Julia!" he exclaimed, taking her hand, "you must know that it is not of my own choice. I am sent on business of the firm which unfortunately I cannot avoid. Does the doctor say that this fever is contagious?"

"Yes; he calls little Frank's attack a very malignant case."

"And you are there over him all the time? Oh! I wish I could take your place; yet here I am to be banished miles away."

"You could not take my place, Mr. Graham. I

am not much afraid, but I wish you were not going."

"Is there nothing you can use to ward off the disease?"

"I will try to do what I can. But you believe in a merciful God, Mr. Graham. He seems to be our only refuge now. Your prayers may be our best help; will you remember us while you are gone?"

"It shall be the cry of my heart day and night. Mr. Butler has promised to write. May you abide 'under the shadow of the Almighty;' and not be afraid 'for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.' Good-bye."

Julia could not trust herself to reply. He stood silent a moment, then dropping her hand turned abruptly, and, taking up his bag, passed rapidly out of the house.

As Julia watched through the long, anxious weeks that followed, Graham's parting prayer seemed to rest like a shield over her, and often a bright flush crossed her pale cheeks as she thought, "It was for me he was so anxious."

CHAPTER XXII.

A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE.

WHEN Ada returned to consciousness, and realized the danger from which she had not yet escaped, memory brought in review her whole useless, contemptible life. It availed her little in that dark hour, that she had often sat down at the Lord's table. She knew that not alone were her garments of self-righteousness soiled in his sight, with hypocrisy and falsehood. She knew that she had used his gift of beauty as a lure to gratify her vanity or selfish designs, and knew that showing no pity to the love she had won, she had sent men from her presence, robbed of all faith in what was pure and true and of good report. Now she was stung by remorse, and her good angel fought hard for her during those days; but as she felt the tide of life turning back to health, the old jealousy returned, and a tempest of conflicting passions raged in her heart. The thought that Julia might even then have supplanted her; that Stokes's insinuations, by which he so skillfully stung her in

every letter, were true, and that she was simply Hunt's tool, made her writhe in agony. When her cousin visited her, her fears were dispelled by his manner for the time, only to return with greater power when she realized what it would be to lose him. Since she was brought to his mother, a little orphan ten years old, all the love of which she was capable had centered upon him. During Henry's vacations she had been his playfellow and accomplice in many a rash plot, and, when at times discovered, she had often borne the punishment he more richly deserved. He was naturally despotic, and found, in both herself and Gordon, willing instruments to carry out his schemes, except that while she had more skill and daring to execute, it required more delicate management to keep her subservient to his wishes.

Perhaps, had Ada been surrounded by other influences she might have made a noble as well as brilliant woman; but from earliest childhood, the effort to keep up a fashionable appearance, no matter how, had been made the purpose of her life. Her parents had always lived beyond their means, and would have left her without a cent had it not been for a small sum settled upon her by her grandfather, and this was hardly enough to provide her clothing. Her aunt, old Mrs. Gordon, instead of educating her with a view to independent self-support, knowing well that she could afford her a

home only during her lifetime, kept her as a companion to wait on her nervous ailments. She had masters come to the house when convenient, and from them Ada had acquired enough accomplishments to make her appear to advantage in society, her aunt insisting that her face must be her fortune.

But Ada would gladly have married her cousin, and submitted to live in a very unpretending home. Hunt, however, may have read her character better, and knew that old habits of extravagance would assert themselves, and being deprived of the luxurious surroundings of her early life, as years progressed, she would become the selfish irritable counterpart of his mother. Though her rare beauty at times made him long to possess her, at heart he had no real love or respect for her, and his cold, callous nature did not hesitate to use her affections so long as they could serve his interests; then he would have tossed them aside as a worthless thing.

But Hunt had found that she was becoming very suspicious, and that he must act with the greatest caution, or gain her bitter enmity. Indeed, it seemed that every move in the desperate game he was now playing was rousing enmity, thus thwarting former plans. Warning had been given him of the plot against his life, and he had been obliged to remain at the hotel in town, when, in Ada's sickness, he saw such an excellent oppor-

tunity to press his suit with Julia. He had been unable to see her alone since the night of the concert, notwithstanding all his maneuvers; though he placed it all to the score of her nephew's illness and his frequent absence. But he resolved that Graham should be kept away on some pretext till old Butler was out of the house; and he meant to let the miners find out that he also could take revenge.

Meanwhile the weeks sped by, and the new life clothing the mountains in verdure, blew the foul miasms away from the breezy cliff, and the shadow of disease was lifted from Cedar Ridge. But it settled down in some of the low wretchedly drained miners' villages, where a long winter's privations had left many a poor soul illy prepared to fight against it.

Spring, so long baffled and driven back by wintry storms, had gained the victory. The young leaves as if by magic covered mountain and plain. The river, which but a few weeks before had risen in such fearful majesty to break its icy fetters, now rippled gently around the hills, bearing many a green island on its bosom. The old gnarled apple-trees had changed into softly tinted pyramids of beauty, as if they had caught and entangled the low sunset clouds in their branches. The robins and blue-birds had returned to their summer homes, and at morning, noon and night the woods rang with their carolings.

But though the conflict in nature seemed brought to a close, that between labor and capital still raged as fiercely as ever. Men driven by six months' idleness to the last extremity, and in want of the very necessaries of life, were becoming desperate.

The great mass, who had nothing to gain but all to lose, were secretly in favor of work at any price. But the power of terrorism was not yet broken, and each distrusted his neighbor.

Among the many honest and trustworthy, there was a class of low rowdies, the vile scum of the country, who accumulated no savings, and, if by any means they could get their dram and tobacco, were averse to steady work. In the hands of the leaders, these became instruments of power. Clothed for a time in unwonted authority, they swaggered round, swearing death to the "black-legs," and loudly proclaiming, "We ask no favors, only grant us our rights."

But the gaunt fiend Starvation will drive men to desperate resolves, and some Welsh and Scotch men went to Mr. Gordon, and signified their willingness to go to work. He ordered Malcome to open the mines at once, and promised protection as far as possible to all who entered.

Walker saw that he must make a bold push, or the strike was over with that colliery. So he called a grand mass meeting, to discuss the question and take a full vote.

It was a pale, dejected-looking set of men and boys that gathered in the golden splendor of a cloudless sky in May, on the mountain back of the colliery. The trees on every side were waving their fresh green banners, and moss and vines sought to cover the ravages of the winter's frost on the old gray rocks. But to that half-fed mass of men, the free prodigal growth of nature, if it at all influenced their thoughts, seemed but to mock their poverty.

Dan Malcome, as Secretary of the Union, was called first to the stump and a crowd of eager listeners closed around. He advised patience and moderation. "Gie each mon his liberty to settle this question as he thinks best," he said. "We've tried force too often to our shame, and what good has it brought us? The most of you have fought this out bravely, honestly, and your faces show what it has cost. I believe as you do, that we have been oppressed by monopolies and combinations, and I for one would say hold out till victory comes if I could see a chance for it. But unless we can prevent any coal from being dug wherever there's a mine in the whole State, we can't command the situation. That is what our union has tried by the utmost exertions to effect. But the miners to the north of us have refused to strike, and those companies have filled the bill at immense profits, while we are driven to the wall. Our supplies from

outside are running short. I see naught to be gained by longer fight. Let those as can't hold out, have the right to go to work unmolested. The longer we delay the deeper we run in debt."

"Aye, aye, them's my sentiments," greeted his speech on all sides. Sam Walker sprang to another stump and called in a loud, ringing voice:

"Listen to me before you take your vote. There's another side to that question. It is easy to see why Dan wants you to go to work. He hopes, through Boss Malcome's influence, to get a situation as engineer."

"I deny the charge," interrupted Dan.

But Walker's loud voice drowned his, and a party of roughs surrounding him, he saw that protest was useless.

"So that he can get his seventy a month," continued Walker, "you must agree to take wages that won't hold soul and body together."

"Faith, an' it's precious little hould they hev noo, but skin and bone," called out a voice from the crowd.

"And will you, after enduring all these hardships, give up now that the victory is almost gained? I know, for I've means of finding out, that Gordon and Hunt must yield in two weeks or fail. If we can but compel them to submit to our terms, the others will have to follow. Think what it is to spend a lifetime under ground. Remember

your widows and orphans, Your children taken from school to pick slate. The wretched hovels in which so many of your comrades are compelled to live. You've seen men under the fatal fire-damp, stagger like drunken men, and made cripples for life. Will you consent to become the white slaves of America at the caprice of tyrants' whims? I tell you that Hunt is a villain. Where he has had the power, he has cheated and driven the poor man to desperation. Gordon and Graham are but his tools. The latter has professed to be your friend, but now he has consented to go for outside mercenaries to fill your places. I tell you if you yield now without a blow, that cold-blooded Hunt has you at his mercy."

With a horrible oath, Bill McQuaid emphasized this sentence, adding, "The old wolf slipped us once, but his day of reckoning is coming."

"Comrades!" shouted Walker, with wild energy, "Will you turn cowards and traitors?"

"No, no!" cried the majority, infuriated by the arguments of their leader. "You give us the word and we will follow."

"Then let us drive those cussed 'black-legs' from the works. It is they who are stealing in to defraud us of our victory. Shall we be the first tamely to submit? Shall we have our brethren in the Union pointing to us as deserters? Do you think they won't know how to mete us the desert-

er's punishment? I tell you there are desperate men in these mountains; men who will get redress for their wrongs or die in the attempt. Let us stand bravely by their sides. If there is a man here who can't hold out two weeks more, if need be, let him show his hand."

None were raised, as might have been expected; all feared being called cowardly and slavish.

"I move," cried McQuaid, "that a committee be sent to these 'black-legs,' backed with arguments that they will consider it best to obey."

"I second the motion," called Tom Lynch. "All in favor say 'aye!'"

Loud cheers responded; perhaps making up in noise what they lacked in heartiness.

A committee was chosen, composed of such men as McQuaid and Lynch, and with their loaded pistols, they headed the procession down the mountain. When near the colliery, the mass of men paused and broke into little groups to watch events. Bitter curses were hurled against the "black-legs;" each expressing himself more strongly from his fear of being thought a sympathizer.

The men at work were summoned to leave. An angry discussion rose on both sides, in front of Ned Malcome's office. He came out, and made his deep, strong voice heard above the tumult, asking:

"Have you heard Gordon and Hunt's decision, if

you force the men to give up work, and the mines are again closed?"

All paused to listen.

"They have declared," continued Malcome, "that they will themselves stop the pumps and flood the mines, so that you can't go in for months if you wish to, and their tenants shall be turned out of their houses, unless the rent due is paid in full. Mr. Hunt gives you a week to decide."

With an oath McQuaid replied, "Hunt needn't try to frighten us with such chaff. He would find that they could threaten, and execute too. And as for you, you cussed time-server, turning against your own class to toady to these tyrants, your day of reckoning is coming."

Malcome drew up his powerful figure, and with his blood boiling with rage, he retorted: "I'm a truer friend to my comrades than you rascally lot of hypocrites and assassins who shoot or stab your victims in the dark, and try to blow up men, women and children with gunpowder, simply to keep them from an honest living, while such as you and Sam Walker filch from them the hard savings you are too lazy to earn for yourselves."

McQuaid's wicked eyes glittered dangerously, and his fist doubled up. But only shaking it at Malcome, he said: "Blow away, old boy, you will find we can carry a bullet a long time, and send it sure at last. I and my comrades are only author-

ized to hustle these black-legs out of the works. If they don't go mighty quick, we'll give 'em a little spur. Your case and Hunt's threat shall be laid before the Union, and they shall decide.

The poor men who had gone to work laid down their tools, and dejectedly, hurriedly, returned to their wretched homes, hooted and jeered at by men, women and children, once their old neighbors and friends.

On the one side, they were driven from self support by the fear of violent death; on the other, they faced slow starvation for themselves and their helpless families, with the certainty that even the pitiful shelter their bare homes afforded would soon be wrested from them. Could it be that this was a country that boasted of its freedom?

CHAPTER XXIII.

DISASTER.



FEW weeks after the events narrated in the last chapter, Hunt went to his office in the Oquago Bank, feeling exceedingly anxious. He had not heard from Stokes for several days, though he had written urging him to work off the stock as fast as possible, he being content with the figure it had then reached. In truth, Hunt's position was becoming critical.

In a fortnight more the board of directors would meet, and he might not be able to cover up his embezzlements; he had been thwarted in so many of his schemes, especially in compelling the miners to resume work. He sent Graham to Philadelphia to see Mr. John Gordon about bringing in other hands, and tried to get funds from him, under pretense of starting up the mines. But the old gentleman replied, that he would be there in a week or ten days. They would talk over matters then, and he could judge better what to do, when on the spot.

This news alarmed Frank Gordon, especially as

Mr. Earle, Grace's uncle, was expected from New York about the first of June, to make a visit. Frank was afraid that the two uncles might find out how Grace's property had become involved. Hunt saw that this combination of circumstances placed him in a fearful strait. There was only one move in the game left, that could save him from utter ruin and disgrace, and that must be made by another, who might wait too long, and so lose all.

He resolved if the mail brought no word from Stokes that morning, that he would take the first train for New York. But the hoped-for letter came, bringing the best of news. Stokes wrote that he had worked the stock up to the highest figure to which it could be brought, and had begun to unload as rapidly as he thought prudent; and he expected in a day or two to return, with a fortune for them both. He would telegraph when he would be there.

Hunt threw down the letter, exclaiming, "By Jove! What a relief! I thought my luck would save me, but this is the closest shave I have had yet. Now I think I will give up speculating, and confine myself to steady business. This operation will give me enough to make all square, and leave a comfortable fortune besides. I don't despair of winning the heiress either. She has been shy since the night of the concert, but that is a good sign. The only trouble is this proposed trip to Scranton

and over the Hawley road, to-morrow and next day. It is old Butler's party, and Graham is especially invited to show the mines at Scranton. I was planning a pretext to keep him home, offering to take his place as being equally able to get the best of attention from the officials at the mines. But this matter in New York must be settled first. However, a telegram may come before night, or perhaps I can have the trip postponed."

With a lighter heart than he had carried for many weeks, Hunt went to work at his regular day's business, having first dispatched a note to Gordon, telling him that he had received good news from Stokes, not to worry, for everything was coming out right.

About noon the telegram arrived from Stokes, saying that he would be there by the evening train, and requesting Hunt to meet him at his usual room at the hotel.

Hunt was jubilant over this rapid fulfillment of his wishes. As the unusually warm spring twilight began, he entered Stokes's room, and opened the windows to let in the soft air. Then lolling in an easy-chair, he slowly puffed his cigar while he waited for his companion.

Pleasant fancies filled his mind ; visions of a palatial dwelling, crowning one of the eminences on the banks of the river, before which Cedar Ridge dwindled into insignificance. Julia Earle was to

be its mistress ; her connections giving him greater prestige among the old families. He would cease to be a small operator, and become the president of some large coal company. He was known to have great executive ability, and wealth would open the way to almost any position.

He did not take into account that this wealth was not yet actually in his grasp, nor did he allow his mind to dwell on the fearful risks that he had run to acquire it. In the reaction from the intense strain of the past weeks, he was indulging in the Lotos-eater's dreams of fancied security, when he was aroused to the present by a tap at the door, and going to it, hastily admitted Stokes.

"Well, old fellow, how are you?" he exclaimed, "I hardly expected you would get off so soon. Were you able to sell all out at the figure you wrote?"

Stokes turned, deliberately locked the door, and advanced toward the table, without saying a word.

"Why don't you speak, man?" cried Hunt, a cold shiver of apprehension creeping over him.

With an oath, Stokes replied, "You needn't be in such a hurry; I've bad news. Every cent we've invested is gone."

Hunt's face took an ashy hue, and he staggered to a seat, where he gazed at him, with wild staring eyes, unable to speak. Stokes closed the windows,

lest their conversation should be overheard. Then sitting down in front of Hunt, in a position to watch every expression of his face, he told the story of their failure: The stock was selling rapidly, and all things seemed favorable, when suddenly it broke, and went down with a run. He made frantic efforts to stop it, taking up again what he had sold, in hopes of restoring confidence. But heavy men refused to purchase, and by noon, five hundred thousand dollars had slipped through his fingers. Some large failures had been reported on the street, and it was one of those unaccountable changes in the stock market that takes the wariest by surprise.

That was the version he gave Hunt. But, in truth, both had been caught in a trap of Stokes's own setting. He intended to sell out his stocks first; then by setting stories afloat damaging to Hunt's credit, hoped to have his revenge by thus ruining him, while he saved himself.

He uttered but a breath of suspicion, and before he knew, the air was thick with rumors, and the bubble struck by his own hand first, burst before he was ready, and all he had, too, was swept away in the storm he had raised.

Stokes was too unscrupulous to hesitate at any means by which to retrieve his losses, and on his way to Hunt had laid his plans. Now he brought them to bear.

"You seem very much cut up by this loss. I didn't suppose, with your resources, it could cripple you. But as you may know, it leaves me pretty thoroughly stranded. I am sorry to be obliged to press you for the money I loaned you last February, but I have nothing to fall back upon excepting that."

"Curse you, Stokes!" exclaimed Hunt, stung to desperation. "After ruining me, have you the audacity now to ask for that money?"

"I lent it in good faith that it would be paid on demand. You took your risks, when you entered into this operation. Surely, in your position as president of the Oquago Bank, you can easily pay that little amount to-morrow. This failure cannot seriously injure your credit."

Hunt thought a moment, then replied, "I can't to-morrow, Stokes. If you will have patience and wait a few days, I will see what I can do. Come to the bank, and we will talk it over. I must go now."

He longed to be alone, to think how he could possibly extricate himself from his embarrassing position. But Stokes, instead of allowing him to leave, drew his chair still closer, and with a cold glitter in his small gray eyes, and a sneer curving his thin blue lips, said, "You don't get rid of me as easy as that, my friend. You thought to use me as your willing tool, to be cast aside when your

work was accomplished. You didn't know, did you, that I was well posted with the condition of your accounts in the bank, that I knew just the exact amounts you had embezzled, and how much of other people's property, held in trust, has been swallowed up in this failure?"

Hunt stared at him a moment in blank amazement, then put his hand to his breast-pocket while a wicked gleam passed over his face. But Stokes coolly laid one hand on the bell-rope, and with the other drew back Hunt's, saying, "If you try that game, I'll bring a crowd here and deliver you up to justice. Do you think a trial for murder would help your cause, or that I'll not defend myself?" he added, quick as a flash drawing out his own pistol.

"Come, Hunt," he continued, laying the weapon down, "you are completely in my power. But if you will listen to reason and comply with a plan I have to propose, I will show you a way out of these difficulties."

Hunt, seeing himself utterly helpless, leaned his head on the table, and two or three hard, dry sobs shook his frame, as he cried, "O my God! What shall I do?"

"What shall you do? Don't make a fool of yourself," sneered Stokes. "Here, take a glass of brandy. Look the situation in the face like a man. I didn't take you for a whimpering baby. Luck

has turned against you this time, but when a man is desperate, he won't stop at trifles, if a friend will show him how he can get a fresh start."

With a strong effort Hunt regained his self-control, and accepting the proffered stimulus, drank it rapidly, but said coldly, "Thank you for your compliment, but let me hear your project first."

"It involves considerable risk, but it is your only chance. You and I must enact the rôle of common burglars, and rob the bank to-morrow night of all we can lay hands on, those worthless securities among the rest; then make tracks for Canada as fast as possible."

"What do you take me for?" asked Hunt haughtily, drawing erect his elegant figure.

"For a gentleman thief hitherto," replied Stokes coolly. "You will have to step down a peg lower to save yourself now, my man."

A deep flush dyed Hunt's face, and again in anger he put his hand to his pocket. But realizing the folly of his conduct, he said with a short, bitter laugh, "I suppose you are right. It is wonderful what a different aspect success or failure gives to these affairs. But I don't see how your scheme is to be accomplished, or what inducement you can have to undertake it?"

"The want of money, 'the root of all evil.' Do you suppose the paltry sum of ten thousand dollars would help me much? Now listen while I give

you my plans. But first you must promise to co-operate with me, or I will reveal everything I know."

"Go ahead! As you say, I have no choice."

"In the first place, I have a complete set of burglars' tools with me, and every facility for taking impressions in wax. To-morrow you secure the keys of the safes, and let me have them a few moments unobserved in your private office. That is an old bank. Has it the new-fangled complicated locks?"

"No, with duplicate keys they can be opened."

"I thought so. I will take the impressions to Philadelphia, and have duplicates made. You give your cashier to understand that our operation is all right yet; that I came on to talk up matters with you, and that you had decided to go on to New York, meet me there and close up the whole thing, returning by Friday if possible, with the money in hand. Let's see. To-day is Monday—yes, Friday will give us time enough. You leave the cars at Cross-roads. Look out that no one sees you. Hide in the woods till dark, then come out at the bridge, by the foot of that steep hill. I will meet you there with two horses and a complete disguise. About two o'clock we will picket our horses in a lonely spot on the other side of the river and easily effect our entrance to the bank. You know where to find what we want most, and we can be off in an hour,

leaving some traces to look as if a gang of ordinary burglars had been at work. Arriving at Scranton, you push on by cross-roads to Montreal, and wait for me there, if you are the first on the spot. I will remain a train over to cover our tracks, and take a different route. If pursued we can lose ourselves in the wilds to the north or sail for Europe. We shall thus have a fair start, for your character will hold good some days longer. If those worthless securities are gone, you may be sure the cashier won't blow on us even if he does suspect you; for his own character will be imperiled, if you are taken. Once out of the country, in Spain or some of her provinces, we can find a fair field to retrieve our fortunes."

After hearing Stokes's proposal, Hunt remained in thought, for some time. His mind recovered its usual acuteness, and he carefully reviewed the whole position; but finally was fully convinced that Stokes's plan offered him his best chance to escape the disgrace and punishment that must follow, when his peculations were discovered. So he signified his full assent to the arrangements as Stokes had made them.

Then followed a long conversation, settling the details, Stokes insisting that the larger share in the spoils should come to him, as the originator and the one running the most risk. They had no confidence in each other. It was a sharp encounter

between two rogues, trying each to cheat the other ; Stokes, by his knowledge of Hunt's position, having the advantage in the contest.

A little after nine they parted, Hunt promising to meet Stokes at the bank by eight the next morning. He then mounted his horse, and started for Cedar Ridge. As he rode through the familiar streets, the half-parted curtains revealed many peaceful firesides, around which happy family circles were gathered.

Before him now, rose the vision of a home he might have had. Unlike his earlier visions of the evening, this was built by patient industry, unswerving integrity, and honorable ambition ; yet love, grace and beauty dwelt in its corridors, and the patter of little feet echoed through its halls.

But as the mirage in the desert, so both visions faded out, and his future stretched before him, like the surrounding landscape that was enveloped in shrouding folds of white mist, through which the moon shone pale and angry, like the eye of avenging justice, following his flight.

As he reached the house, he felt that he could not meet them or stay there that night. So he rode up in front of the parlor windows and looked in, as a lost spirit might upon the paradise he was about to ruin. Seated on a sofa opposite the window was Gordon, playing with the long golden curls of his wife's hair, as she sat beside him, turn-

ing with merry jests from him to Mr. and Mrs. Butler, their guests. Hunt had not seen Gordon's face look so joyous and free from care for weeks. He knew what caused that relieved expression, as Gordon chatted with his friends, unconscious of the impending blow.

As Hunt turned away, a stern voice seemed to demand of him, "Where is now thy brother?" and it availed him little to reply, "His blood rests not on my hands. Am I my brother's keeper?"

But is not the soul more than the body? Is not the man who tampers with another's integrity, who corrupts and blasts his character, a deeper criminal in God's sight?

Beyond in the bay-window, seated at the chess-table where he had sat but a few weeks before, were Julia and Graham. Now, out in the darkness, he watched Graham looking down with an earnest gaze on his fair opponent, as she leaned over the board; her white hand resting in faultless contrast on the black knight she was about to move; her forehead slightly drawn by lines of perplexed thought; but the rich color coming and going in her cheeks, and the shy droop of her eye-lashes, indicating that she was half-conscious that her companion's thoughts were not wholly absorbed in the game.

Hunt knew that his most flattering attentions had never brought that expression to her face.

Stung by jealousy, yet conscious that his own acts had sealed his fate, torn and tortured by remorse, he put spurs to his horse and dashed away, trying to outride the storm of passion in his heart. Alas ! he carried the storm within him. Conscience urged him even yet to pause. But with a mocking jeer, the demon told him that it was too late. Would he like to face a jury of his friends and business acquaintances of years, as a culprit at the bar ? To have such men as Walker and McQuaid pointing at him with the finger of scorn ? “ But there is a higher bar,” again pleaded conscience, “ where you must meet them all, and eternal punishment will be your sentence then.”

“ It’s a lie, a fable,” he cried ; “ I won’t believe it. It’s nothing but luck. I will try mine once more. This little world will soon forget me, and I it ; on a broader theatre I will compel success ; but ”—and then came the fierce counter-rush of fears and forebodings and outraged conscience—“ what, what then if I fail of all ? fail at the last ? ”

So the conflict raged that night in a human soul more grand and wild than that even which had so lately been witnessed, when the ice and water rose in terrible collision on the banks of that now peaceful river—raged long, but the demon won.

Going back to the house, he rode around by the library, where he saw Ada seated under the lamp,

reading to his mother, who was reclining on a sofa.

For a moment he was strongly tempted to go in and confess his wrong, and beg for forgiveness and sympathy. If there were any in the wide world who loved him, they were those two. But how much was their love worth? Judging by his own selfishness, conscious how he had wronged them, too, could he believe that they would do aught but upbraid him, when they knew that all their property, intrusted to his care, was gone? No; he must cut loose from all ties, and become a wanderer on the face of the earth.

And, as he looked at his mother's face, with its weak, fretful lines, he excused his conduct by saying to himself: "If she had only made me obedient when a boy and instilled honest, upright principles, I wouldn't be the miserable wretch I am now, or have brought this disgrace upon them all."


So she reaped the seed she had sown, after many days, and the sight of a mother's face, instead of saving, damned.

Turning away, he tied his horse, and quietly crept up to his room, getting some valuables that he wished to take with him. Then stealing out of the house, he again mounted his horse, and fled away in the darkness; and the elegant and accomplished Mr. Hunt, who had been courted and admired by all, spent his last night in the hotel,

conscious that he would soon be known in his true character of a miserable sneaking thief, fit comrade for McQuaid and his compeers, the scum and off-scouring of the earth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BENEATH THE SURFACE.

T was a merry party that started on their pleasure-trip the next day. Only Frank Gordon and his step-mother remained to keep house and look after the baby and servants. When they reached the hotel at Scranton, Graham proposed that they should take a carriage immediately and visit the mines before dressing for dinner. This was received with universal favor, and they were soon riding toward the Central Colliery.

"Will you go into the mines, Grace?" asked Julia.

"No; I am afraid. I never relished the idea of going under-ground alive. I suppose, Mrs. Butler, you won't attempt it either?"

"No, dear; it is nothing new to me; but I didn't mind such trips when I was younger. Let the young ladies go down, then each will have a gentleman to see that no harm befalls them."

"I doubt if my courage is equal to the enter-

prise," said Ada, as they rode up in front of the ugly, black breaker.

"I will take good care of you, Miss Ada," said Mr. Butler, offering to help her out. But, seeing the smutted faces of the miners, and feeling no particular desire to go under Mr. Butler's escort, she declined. The gentlemen rallied her on her want of courage, but were not very loth to leave her behind.

When Julia stood on the black elevator which was to take her far into the depths of the earth, Graham, close beside her, held a burning lamp at the end of a long stick, while the overseer had another, beside the one fastened to his cap.

"Are you afraid?" asked Mr. Butler.

"Oh, no," she replied; "this is only reversing the usual process at the hotels. Here, we go down first; but what is to stop us if we get under too much speed?"

"These cogs," said Graham; "they would catch and hold us if the rope broke."

In a moment more they reached the bottom of the mine, and, stepping off the platform, Julia saw long, dark tunnels, stretching right and left, where the lamps, fastened to the miners' caps, flitted about as they moved here and there, like mammoth fire-flies. The number of men near the shaft made it seem like a lighted room, its hard, black walls glistening under their lamps. A strong

current of cool, fresh air fanned their cheeks as they passed between the heavy timbers that supported the roof of coal or rock above them.

"Take care, Miss Julia. Don't get too close to those mules," said Graham, turning hastily around to draw her back from the track, as with shouts of men, and clanking of chains, three powerful animals came plunging out of the darkness before them, drawing a loaded car toward the shaft.

"Oh! poor creatures," exclaimed Julia. "Think of keeping them in this dismal place. Don't they become blind?"

"Oh, no, Miss," said the overseer. "They are often here for months. I will show you their stable."

He conducted them through strong wooden doors into other tunnels, where the animals at rest were feeding, and drinking from fresh clear water, with not a gleam of light to guide them.

"These mules scarcely look like objects of pity, Miss Julia," remarked Graham.

"Nevertheless, I am sorry for them. They are a long-enduring and much-abused race. Do they ever go on a strike?"

"Yes, indeed, Miss," said the boss-miner, with a laugh. "But they get struck back so hard that they are glad to submit and go to work again."

On their return, as their guide drew open one of the broad wooden doors the strong draft blew out

their lights. They stood a moment, in what seemed to Julia the blackness of darkness. She gave a slight cry of alarm, but Graham instantly grasped her hand in a firm pressure as he whispered, "Don't be frightened, Miss Julia. I am close by you."

"I'll have my matches in a minute," said the overseer. He struck one or two that failed to light, but Julia now was not troubled at the delay, and when once more they went on their way, she did not withdraw her hand, which Graham still retained under pretext of helping her over the rough broken coal dropped here and there upon the track. Old Mr. Butler strode on before, holding a brisk conversation with their guide, a very intelligent miner.

Julia said to Graham, as they slowly followed, "I thought, when our lights went out, what a terrible position it would be to get lost down here, without a lamp or matches. It reminded me of descriptions of the catacombs. Did you ever read 'The Marble Faun?' "

"Yes. When you were frightened a moment ago, did you expect to see Hawthorne's 'Spectre' suddenly appear, threatening henceforth to dog your footsteps?"

"No. But one could find him here, without much stretch of the imagination. Do you see that tall miner off there alone, with his pick now raised? Wouldn't he answer for the 'spectre?' "

"Let us take a nearer view, and you can see how the coal looks, when they dig it out of the vein. I scarcely think you need fear any apparitions."

"You think then that there is nothing spiritual about me?"

"Nothing ghostly, Miss Julia. But you are the bravest woman I ever knew."

"Because I had the courage to come down here? Perhaps, though, you consider me rather of the amazon order, like Biddy Maguire? In character I mean, not size," she added hastily, meeting Graham's laughing eyes.

But their expression changed to deep earnestness as he answered, "I have seen nothing in your character that is not womanly. That does not of necessity, however, imply weakness. You know that I have witnessed your courage meet stronger tests than this without flinching. And none was more severe than the siege of watching you passed through, during that sickness a few weeks since. I never expect to have a harder task put upon me, than it was to leave Cedar Ridge then."

Julia's cheeks flushed and her eyes filled, as she said in a low voice, "You are right, Mr. Graham, that was the hardest experience I ever had. But I learned more during those long nights, than in all my life before. You were a great help to me then."

Graham turned quickly, and looked at her in-

tently for a moment, as with a thoughtful face she picked her way over the coal.

"Will you tell me something about that experience, Miss Julia, when we have a chance for a long talk? If you only knew how I wanted to help you!"

By this time they had reached the end of the tunnel, and as Julia saw the man's smutted face and bright eyes gleaming on her, by the light of his lamp fastened just above them, she whispered, "He really looks more like a fiend than a spectre."

"I think we will find him a harmless one. There is no appearance of dusky wings."

"Good-day, my friend. Here is a lady come a long distance, to see how you dig out coal," said Graham, addressing the miner.

"I'm right glad to see you, Miss. It isn't often we've visitors, 'specially sich purty young leddies."

"Oh! thank you. Have you a blarney-stone down here?"

"Faith! no, Miss. But I kissed it jist afore I started from ould Ireland."

"I thought so," said Julia, laughing.

"But, indade, an' that remark o' mine was the blessed truth, an' no blarney, as I doubt not the gintlemon at yer side has often tould ye."

"I might think it, but would scarce dare tell her so," said Graham laughing, while his eyes spoke for him.

"See here! these remarks are becoming too personal. How do you break this up, so that you can pick it out?" asked Julia, hiding her blushes, as she stooped to examine the layers of coal.

"By blasting, Miss. You were jist a bit too late for that."

"Come, young folks," called Mr. Butler; "we are taking too much time."

"I wonder when I get out of here, if I will be 'meself,' as our Irish friend there would say, or changed into a lady of color," said Julia.

"Very highly colored, Miss Julia, judging by appearances in this light."

"Why! am I so dark already?"

"I did not say that the color was black."

"Is there any way to get out of here other than the shaft?"

"Yes, there are five exits to this mine. Our entrances at Cedar Ridge Colliery are by slopes and drifts."

"What are they?"

"A slope, as the name indicates, is an inclined descent, and a car is drawn up and down the track, by means of a strong iron rope, attached to a stationary engine. A drift is an opening in the side of a hill."

"Really, since I have been down here, I can hardly wonder that the miners struck at a reduction of their wages. I don't think that any money

would tempt me to work in this awful blackness. I shall appreciate my cheerful grate-fire more than ever."

"It isn't an easy life. But those that work here are used to it, and prefer it to being above ground. They are not exposed to such extremes of weather."

On their way to the shaft, Graham and Julia exchanged friendly greetings with the men, and their eyes often lit up with pleasure at her bright courteous manner.

They rode on the elevator to the top of the breaker, and there watched the loaded cars dump their contents down an inclined plane, where great cylinders, amid clouds of dust, caught and broke up the coal. As Julia saw men and boys sitting right in the midst, picking out slate, she exclaimed, "I would rather work below, than breathe that vile dirt all the time. I don't wonder that the miners say so much against their children's picking out slate."

"Only their necessities compel them. Poverty is their task-master," said Mr. Butler.

Just then, as they were going down the stairs, a man stepped forward, and handing Graham one of Julia's gloves, said, "Your wife dropped that, sir, on the floor above."

A scarlet flush instantly covered both their faces, showing him his mistake, and he moved off with a half embarrassed, half amused expression.

Julia rushed on into the engine-room, where she became very much absorbed with the machinery.

"Coming events cast their shadows before, my dear," whispered Mr. Butler at her side.

"Stupid man," snapped Julia, then walked off and engrossed the whole attention of the engineer, by her questions, utterly ignoring both gentlemen. As she stood looking at the large roller, on which the iron rope wound and unwound as the unseen elevator went up and down, Graham came to her side, and with laughing eyes handed her the glove, saying, "Miss Julia, here is some of your property."

She could not avoid a conscious smile, but hastily turned to ask, "How does the engineer know when to wind or unwind the rope?"

"Do you hear that bell tingle? They give the signal at the bottom of the mine."

"Isn't it wonderful how any one could think it all out?"

"It is the work of many minds through many years, that has brought it all to its present perfection."

"See here, young folks, have you forgotten that three ladies and dinner are waiting for us?" asked Mr. Butler. "It is well you have a sober old man with you, or there is no telling when you would return. Miss Julia, I shall report you."

"But, Mr. Butler, I am of an inquiring mind, you see."

"Ah! you think circumstances might make it well to be posted on these subjects?" replied the old gentleman, as he followed her to the carriage.

"Knowledge never comes amiss, sir."

"My dear friends, what an age you have been gone!" exclaimed Grace, as they appeared.

"We thought that the mines must have caved in and buried you," said Ada.

"I am glad to see that you could bear the thought so cheerfully, Miss Ada," answered Mr. Butler. "Thanks are due to me alone, that we are here now. You ought to have seen Miss Julia flirting with that handsome engineer."

"Now that's a slander, sir. I was only asking questions in a spirit of laudable inquiry," cried Julia, with mock indignation.

"Mr. Butler, you should have heard the compliments the miners down below paid her," said Graham.

"I overheard one at the top of the breakers," replied the old gentleman demurely. Both his companions' faces flushed again, and Graham said in a low tone, while his eyes furtively sought Julia's, "I think, sir, in that supposition, I received the greater compliment."

Grace looked from one to the other, and a dim perception of the true state of feeling between Graham and Julia dawned upon her, and also a fear lest her schemes with regard to Hunt should

be frustrated. So, in as irritable a tone as she ever used, she exclaimed, "Really, Mr. Butler, I get out of all patience with Julia. She is so plebeian in her tastes. I am afraid that some day she will marry a man without a cent, and utterly beneath her in position."

"Are you afraid that I will disgrace you, my aristocratic sister? To hear you talk one would think we Earles were daughters of some old nobleman, tracing his pedigree back to the Conquest, or the flood, with lions rampant on our shield."

"I am sure the Earles of New York are one of its oldest and most respectable families. I have great faith in good family blood; haven't you, Mr. Butler?"

"Yes, where it consists of character."

By this time their carriage had reached the hotel, and it was a relief to all to retire to their rooms, and rest before dinner. When Ada found herself alone, she sat down on her lounge, with an expression of weariness and disgust, and soon became absorbed in painful thought.

She would not have accepted the invitation to join this party, if she had not been impelled by several contradictory motives. None of them were very congenial companions, and she knew that her presence was no addition to their pleasure, although she could not complain of lack of politeness.

She had received letters from Stokes, telling her that he would arrive at Cedar Ridge about that time, and pressing her for a final answer. In these letters, he had so contrived to throw out hints and insinuations against Hunt's credit, his suspicions of Hunt's treachery toward him, and his power to take revenge on those that played him false, that Ada was kept in a very uncomfortable frame of mind.

She knew that Stokes loved her, and that he would hesitate at no step by which he might secure her. But she felt such a dread of him, that at times she believed that even if she lost her cousin, she would do anything rather than marry him. Then the picture he drew of the wealth he would lavish upon her, and the gay world on the other side of the ocean to which he would introduce her, looked much more attractive than having to earn her living. So she was not prepared to give his proposal a final rejection.

She knew that Hunt had intended to make some excuse to keep Graham back, and take his place on this trip. Why he had not carried out his purpose she could not imagine, unless Stokes's coming had made it necessary for him to remain. One of the servants told her that Hunt had been at the house and in his room the night before they started. She had tried his door, and found it locked. She could hardly believe it possible that

he had been there, and seen none of the family ; yet a feeling of undefined dread—a presentiment of coming trouble—haunted her.

“ Oh ! ” she thought, “ if I could only lift the veil from the future for a little. It is so hard to wait.”

If ?—If past warnings were unheeded, would she have met the test, when it came, with a truer, braver spirit ?

CHAPTER XXV.

A LEAP IN THE DARK.



AFTER the ladies had retired for the night, Mr. Butler asked Graham if he would give him his company, while he smoked a cigar out on the veranda?

Maurice readily assented, and sitting comfortably in their chairs, they watched the still busy street, and the long trains of cars as they moved into the station, paused a few moments, and then sped away and disappeared around the distant hills. For some time both were silent, the puffs of smoke from the old man's cigar curling up around his gray hairs, till, taking it from his lips, he asked abruptly, "What are you going to do, Maurice? Be a superintendent of coal mines all your days?"

With a painful start, Graham replied, "Are you a clairvoyant, sir, that you give such exact expression to my thoughts? I have a strong motive, I might almost say a passionate desire, Mr. Butler, to be in a different position." Then pausing, he added with quiet firmness, "But having a widowed

mother, and two young brothers dependent on me, I must not give up a certain support, for any ventures. It was folly to think of it."

"Will you allow an old man the privilege of speaking frankly, on a subject he has very much at heart?"

"Certainly, sir. But I am weak to-night. Don't tempt me, Mr. Butler." And he heaved a deep sigh, as if in response to his own thoughts.

"My poor boy! You have had to carry heavy burdens for your years," said the old man, laying his hand gently on Graham's shoulder, while a mist gathered before his eyes. "Do you know that you remind me so constantly of our Will? He would have been just your age now."

Maurice grasped his companion's hand, saying, "We're all tested in some way, sir. It is hard to have our dearest hopes blighted, but perhaps hereafter we shall see the wherefore."

A long pause followed, and the cigar was smoked out and thrown away. Then Mr. Butler said:

"Maurice, I told you I intended to speak frankly. Will you listen, and accept my proposition in the spirit in which it is offered?"

"I think I can trust you, sir, not to ask what it would be unworthy of me to grant."

"Then, will you come into our home—you are already in our hearts—and take the place of the son we have lost?"

“Why, Mr. Butler! I am not—I have no claim,” he exclaimed, springing to his feet in intense excitement.

“Wait, Graham, listen till I am through. Neither Mrs. Butler nor myself have any near connections who have claims upon us. We were attracted toward you from the first of our acquaintance, and this attachment has been growing every day as your noble character has been revealed to us. We are getting old and need a strong young arm to lean upon as we go down into the dark valley. If you would take my name, Maurice, I could from henceforth live in your future. Your mother has two other sons. I know that your father and my boy in heaven would rejoice at this new earthly bond. Will you, Maurice?”

“Mr. Butler, I truly appreciate this honor. If I can in any way contribute to your happiness, I will gladly do so. But in regard to your generous offer, I hardly know what to say, or how to express my feelings, sir, so you will understand the motives that govern me. As I said before, I am not a free man to choose; I have those dependent on me.”

“I see what you mean, but, Graham, I intend to place you in a position where you can support them better than now. You and I have had many a talk on the management of this coal trade, and the strikes among the miners. I propose setting

you up in the business, and then we can see how these theories work when put into practice. I won't press you for an answer to-night. I know that your heart is in the right place. I would not see you neglect any present claim or duty, but I think that they need not conflict. Our home would be much happier for your presence. And if you should bring a wife there, the mother's cup of joy would be full. I know a little girl that I could recommend, but maybe we don't think alike. Good-night. We'll talk this over more fully when we return home."

Graham wrung the old man's hands, but could find no expression in words. When alone, as he again looked up at the beautiful star-lit sky, he thought how changed it was from an hour before. Then so cold, so unattainable in its glittering light, fit emblem of the bright hopes that he felt must be banished from his heart. Now, sparkling and dancing with joy.

Early the next morning, when the party started on their trip, a gray mist hung over the town. But Mr. Butler relieved their apprehensions of a dull day, by assuring them that the sun would soon dispel the fog. When they reached the station at Dunmore his prophecy was fulfilled, and the mist lifted like a curtain from before a beautiful picture, showing the mountain clothed in every shade of green, from the sombre pines to the golden-tipped

hemlocks ; while in the deep ravines, dark gray masses of vapor still rolling upward gave the effect of a half-revealed mystery to the landscape.

"Oh, isn't it beautiful? Look how the sunlight glorifies those wreaths of smoke, rising from the top of that hill," exclaimed Julia. "One might imagine it a morning sacrifice. I don't wonder that the old Israelites chose groves and high places for their altars."

"Mammon is the god worshiped there, I fancy. I did not believe that anything about a coal-breaker could be pretty, Miss Julia, but that smoky effect is certainly very fine," said Mr. Butler.

"O Joe! you are too practical. You let one down so uncomfortably," replied his wife.

"No, my dear, we are all going up now. Please take my arm, for that iron rope fastened to our car will draw us to the top of the first plane."

There were but few other passengers, and it was with unfeigned surprise that they recognized Mr. Stokes among the number. When he greeted Ada, an expression of apprehension and repugnance was also plainly visible on her face, but he gave it no apparent heed.

With a great effort for self-control, she managed as he took her hand, to say easily, "This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Stokes. When did you return from New York?"

"On Monday. I learned from your cousin, Mr.

Hunt, of your trip, and found that I could make my arrangements to join you. I hope I shall not be considered intrusive."

"Was Mr. Stokes ever that? Why didn't Henry come with you?"

Ada was intensely anxious to know the result of their operation in New York, and felt very much embarrassed and uncertain how to treat Stokes. He read her thoughts, and watching an opportunity when the attention of the others was absorbed with the scenery, said in a low tone, "Mr. Hunt went to New York on business. He has neither time nor inclination for pleasure-trips now, Miss Ada."

His manner and the expression of his eyes conveyed more meaning than his words. Ada turned very pale, as a suspicion of the truth flashed upon her; but looking up with a defiant glance she asked, "Have you dared to play him false?"

A deadly light like the glare of a wild beast upon its prey, shone for a moment in his eyes, as he hissed his answer so close that it could reach no other ear.

"Your cousin has but reaped as he has sown, and were it not for the chance of escape I am now giving him, a felon's trial and punishment would await him."

"I don't believe you!" she exclaimed, turning passionately on him.

"We are not yet alone, I would advise you to

keep cool." Then added aloud, "It is actually so. This gravity road is made entirely of refuse coal-dust, or culm, as they call it. Miss Hunt, if you will come to the rear platform, I can show you the proof of what I say."

Ada rose, and glancing around, saw Julia's eyes fixed upon her in keen scrutiny. She was too far away to hear their first remarks, but Ada immediately realized the necessity of avoiding suspicion, from her especially, and replied with a light laugh,

"It seems impossible, Mr. Stokes, that they would use such material to make a road. Why not ordinary earth embankments?"

"Because they felt that this was putting it to the best account." In a moment more they stood outside, but the door was fastened open, and Ada saw that she must still act with great caution. So in a calm tone she asked:

"What proof have you of your assertion, Mr. Stokes?"

"A letter from Hunt to yourself."

"Give it to me, please."

"It must of necessity be a great shock to you. I am exceedingly anxious to shield your cousin from disgrace, and it is of the utmost importance that no suspicions are aroused, till he is safely out of the country. I trust your regard for him is still sufficient to induce you to aid me in this effort. When we reach Hawley, I will engage a carriage to

visit Paupack Falls, and thus have an opportunity for private conversation ; I have much of great importance to communicate."

Here he was interrupted by Grace and Mr. Butler, and soon the whole party joined them. The conversation became general in comments on the beautiful scenery through which they were so rapidly speeding, without any apparent motive power. Ada remained very quiet outwardly, her eye roving far over the Moosic Highlands, where the hills rose one above another in wide graceful curves, some black with heavy cloud shadows, others bathed in floods of golden light. They might have been as barren and unattractive as the Sahara, for all impression made upon her brain, for beneath her calm exterior was waging a war of fiercely-contending passions.

It was a relief when Hawley was reached, and she actually found herself riding with Stokes toward the Falls, the carriage containing the rest of the party behind them.

Her first request was for the promised letter. She tore it open tremblingly, yet with apparent self-control, conscious that Stokes's eyes were fastened upon her.

It was the old familiar hand-writing, but the characters seemed burned into her brain with fire. It ran as follows :

DEAR ADA :

Stokes will remain over to-night, and has promised to hand you this note. I believe that I can trust you not to betray me. Luck has been against me all winter. Hoping to save myself, I have become heavily involved, and, unfortunately, have also involved others. Gordon and the directors of the bank will be inclined to take revenge ; for when a man fails, all his creditors pounce like vultures upon him. I have, therefore, thought it wisest to get beyond their clutches till the wheel of fortune takes a new turn. The rich old uncles will come to the rescue ; they will see that you are all taken care of for the credit of the family. This was not exactly the return I meant to make for your kind efforts in my behalf. Let me commend my old mother to your tender care. I didn't even dare say "good-bye" to her. Hoping to see you again under more prosperous circumstances, I remain as ever,

Your affectionate cousin,

HENRY.

Ada crushed the paper in her hand. Was this heartless letter the end of all intercourse with the man she had loved since childhood ?

Necessity made her mind unusually active and clear. She immediately grasped the whole situation in all its painful details. She saw the consternation and anger of Gordon and his uncle, and the

weak complainings of his mother and Grace, that would be called forth when Hunt's defalcations became known. In imagination she beheld old John Gordon, blustering and irritable, venting his wrath on whoever was nearest, while her aunt fainted, and Julia stormed, and Grace sided first with one, then the other. She had a morbid horror of painful scenes, and knew that there would be neither sympathy nor desire for her presence there. No doubt her property and what little her aunt possessed was gone. They would even be inclined to suspect her of complicity with Hunt, knowing they had had so many private interviews lately. What should she do? What could she do?

Stokes pretended to be wholly absorbed in managing his spirited horse, and left her alone to her thoughts.

But the ride was a short one, and a few moments' rapid driving brought them to the lower falls. He helped her out, and, fastening his horse, walked with her to the edge of the bank where, just above them, the water fell partly in terraces of foamy whiteness and partly in a sheer leap of seventy feet, to the rocks beneath.

"Here, Miss Ada, is a path leading down below the falls, where we can find a seat, and talk undisturbed. I think you and I have something more important to occupy our attention now, than the beauties of nature."

"Where are the rest of the party?"

"They have gone on to the upper falls. Give me your hand and I will guide you down."

He led her to a point where the overhanging rocks formed a little cave, with a large, flat stone for a seat. Here they could talk, their voices drowned by the roar of the waters.

"Miss Hunt," said Stokes, still retaining her hand, "are you prepared to give me an answer yet? You must be aware that I am anxiously awaiting to hear my fate."

Ada snatched away her hand, and exclaimed, bitterly: "Mr. Stokes, what do you mean? Surely you cannot—this is no time to think of such matters."

"There can be no more fitting time—for you at least, Miss Ada."

"Again I ask, what do you mean?"

"If you will listen patiently, I will now tell you. It is useless to repeat, I love you; that you know already. I also know that you are now penniless. Mrs. Gordon can no longer afford you a home. Wait—listen; I take no advantage from that fact, except to lay before you anew, an offer of marriage, and to only insist that now, at once, your answer must be given, your decision made. I have no longer an object to detain me in this region, and business demands my presence in the West, immediately. If, instead of returning with your

party, you will remain here and marry me, to-night we can start on the Erie road, on our way toward San Francisco. From there I will take you to Europe, and a life of wealth and happiness lies before you. You know, too well, the other alternative."

"But, Mr. Stokes, why not wait a little? No girl likes to steal away in this clandestine manner. Your offer is generous, honorable, I appreciate it. Come back with us, and I will be married among my friends."

"Your friends will be in an excellent mood for marriage festivities, with disgrace and failure staring them in the face! Miss Ada, if we go back, it will be as witnesses at your cousin's trial. Do you care to stand under oath, and declare what you know of his doings? Are you prepared to hear all that I may have the power to reveal, interviews at early breakfast hours, and the like?"

Ada gave a violent start, but taking no notice he continued, "No! You must decide whether you take my offer as it now stands. We can be married here after the return train leaves for Scranton. We will remain where we are, and give the impression that we were too late. You can write to your friends, telling them what you have done. I do not think that under present circumstances they will lay it very much to heart, or be severe in their judgment.'

Ada writhed under this stinging sarcasm, but she knew that it was too true. Not in the wide world was there one who would give her more than a passing thought. She knew that this man loved her, but what was his passion worth? When the first fervor was over, would he still be true to her? She was conscious that she did not care for him, that in fact she almost hated him. But how could she take the other alternative, and go among the toiling ranks of homeless, friendless women, to earn a living?

Just then Mr. Butler's voice was heard above the roar of the water, telling them that it was time to return. She looked up and saw Graham standing on the rocks above, and she thought of the time when he sought her, believing her all that was noble and true, and unconsciously she heaved a deep sigh of regret for that lost position.

"For of all sad words of tongue, or pen,
The saddest are these, 'It might have been.'"

"Ada, Ada, darling, choose now or we part!" whispered Stokes, drawing her toward him.

She looked down to the black water, shuddered and longed to plunge in, and so end the struggle; then up to the heavy clouds, which were hurrying across the sky; she felt a shivering presentiment of

misery to come, if she yielded, and almost resolved to dare the worst, and be true to her better self. But Stokes drew her still closer, and his eyes demanded their answer, with a passionate power. Oh, what should she do?

CHAPTER XXVI.

DISCOVERY.



WHEN the train left the station that afternoon Stokes and Ada were not with the party.

Julia had been feeling depressed all day. Now that her sister's suspicions were fully aroused she had taken pains to keep her and Graham from any private tête-à-têtes, and had tried to convince Julia that Graham was either very fickle in his love, or had turned from Ada to seek her for her wealth. She had too much confidence in his integrity to believe this assertion, and knew that Ada's own conduct had alienated his regard; but her sister's words left a sting.

Stokes's unexpected appearance, and now his and Ada's non-appearance, gave an intense apprehension of something wrong to the minds of all. It was a silent, dejected pleasure-party therefore, that turned toward Dunmore. The scenery was not as attractive, their way lying mostly through the heart of a gloomy forest, that lacked the bright sunlight glinting between the interlacing

branches. But when near the end of the journey, on making a sharp turn they reached Barney's Bluffs, towering high above them, with vast walls of unbroken green or sheer rock curving round like some giant's amphitheatre, Julia sprang to her feet exclaiming, "Oh! isn't this grand?"

"Miss Julia, come to the rear platform and take in the whole effect. It changes with still greater beauty every moment now," said Graham, coming quickly to her side.

"Yes, indeed. But can we stand there safely while going so fast?"

"Take my arm and steady yourself with your other hand on that iron bar, then you cannot fall."

So they sped on circling round the bluffs, half way up their sides, sometimes through cuts in the rocks, where in every crevice and fissure green vines, fragrant ferns, and delicate mosses were growing, then by overhanging cliffs, where immense masses had been blasted away to give space for the track; the great rough blocks lying piled one upon another on the sides, and at the foot of the precipice below.

Graham held Julia firmly, while she looked down into the chasm where Roaring Brook leaped and sparkled over its stony bed. There was a murmur of voices behind them; but as they stood thus looking back at the grand cliffs which seemed to close behind them as the car sped down the track,

they two felt alone, in one of nature's vast fortresses, and the mountain spirits who dwelt there wove their magic spells about them, and united them with a bond that could never more be severed.

When they returned to the hotel at Scranton, Graham found a telegram awaiting him from Frank Gordon, telling of the robbery of the bank, and requesting him to start immediately for Philadelphia to inform his uncle John Gordon, and employ detectives to discover the thieves.

The rest returned to Cedar Ridge with troubled hearts. Frank Gordon met them, looking anxious and careworn, but gave as brief replies as possible to their questions. There was something mysterious about the whole matter, and Grace and Julia did not sleep much that night. The next day wore away, full of uneasy rumors, and anxieties about Ada.

Near nightfall Graham and Uncle John arrived. He was a small spare man, and quick and nervous in his movements. His first question to his nephew was, "Has Hunt returned yet?"

"No, sir;" answered Frank, with evident reluctance.

"Have you telegraphed him the news?" he asked again impatiently, without stopping to acknowledge Grace's greeting or Julia's introduction with more than a quick nod of the head.

"Yes, sir; but I have received no answer. I can't account for it, unless he is on his way back, and did not wait to reply."

"You will not hear of him from that quarter," said one of the directors of the bank, who entered just then.

"What do you mean, sir?" asked old Mr. Gordon, sharply. But Frank stepped forward to welcome his visitor, and said: "Allow me to introduce Mr. Barlow, uncle."

Both gentlemen acknowledged the courtesy, but were evidently under too strong excitement for much formality. Frank turned again to the director, and asked eagerly:

"Have you received tidings from Hunt?"

"No, but I have heard of him. I have just had a letter from Stokes, who was his agent in his Wall-street speculations, where he had been using the bank funds, and all else, I fancy, intrusted to him. Failing of success, and knowing that his speculations would be immediately discovered, he, on Tuesday night, entered the bank, disguised as a common thief, secured all that he could lay his hands on, and escaped to Canada. This letter says that we will probably find him hiding in some obscure tavern in Montreal, if he has not yet sailed for Europe. I sent on detectives immediately."

Frank Gordon turned ghastly pale, and stagger-

ing to a seat by his wife, groaned, "O Grace! he has ruined us!"

His uncle grasped his arm, demanding, "Did you know of this before, Frank?"

"No, sir; and I can hardly believe it now."

"Why trust the story of that adventurer Stokes?" asked Julia, indignantly. "He is more likely to be the thief himself, and has now run off with Ada, and taken this way to cover his tracks. I believe him capable of anything."

"Yes, Mr. Barlow," exclaimed Graham, coming forward, "that does not seem improbable. What proof have you of the truth of his story?"

"None, except circumstantial evidence, Hunt's sudden disappearance, and our inability to trace him, coupled with the statement Stokes gives, that Hunt cheated him out of ten thousand dollars, and he meant thus to have his revenge. He suspected Hunt, kept a watch upon him, and thus made his discovery. He says that important business takes him West, but he can be interviewed at the Sherman House, Chicago. I have also sent parties in search of him. What is this that you say about his running off with Miss Hunt?"

"He joined us at Dunmore, and went with us over the gravity road to Hawley, and he and Miss Ada did not return; but I have a letter from her to you, Mrs. Gordon, which came by the evening

mail. This may throw more light on the subject," answered Graham.

Grace was too alarmed and bewildered to read it, so Julia tore open the envelope and ran hastily over its contents, then said; "They missed the train. Ada writes that she has accepted an offer from Mr. Stokes, and, under the circumstances, thought it wisest to be married at once, and go with him West, as he was then on the way to Chicago. She wishes her trunks sent on immediately to the Sherman House."

This but confirmed their fears in regard to Hunt, and old Mr. Gordon again demanded of his nephew if he knew that Hunt was speculating in Wall street, through this man, and if Grace's property or the funds of the firm were involved.

Frank was speechless, and cowered under the pressure of his uncle's hand.

"Why don't you speak, man?" he cried, stamping his foot with rage and mortification. "Is it possible that my nephew—one bearing the name of Gordon—could rob his wife and child? I speak not of the trust I had in you. Frank, I disown you!"

"O Frank! tell him that you are innocent," exclaimed Grace, clinging to him, and looking reproachfully at his uncle.

"I cannot!" he groaned, covering his face from their gaze.

"Oh! this is terrible," cried Grace, turning slowly from him.

But he caught her hand, and, forgetting the others, said: "Grace, my wife! I did not mean to wrong you. I was led on, little by little. Oh! what a fool I have been."

"Ay! fool and knave too!" exclaimed the old man bitterly. "And, Grace, you were another, to give him the power. What business had you to sign such papers?"

"I know nothing about business. He had control of all. If I couldn't trust my husband, who could I?" she replied, with a moan of distress, as she buried her face on the lounge.

"O Grace, Grace!" he pleaded, coming close to her side, and trying to look into her eyes. "Don't throw me off. Don't turn from me. I know I deserve it, but forgive me just this once, and I'll work day and night, till I restore all."

"Much work you've ever done, or will do. It was your confounded laziness that brought upon you this disgrace," sneered his uncle. "I shall clear the Gordon name from dishonorable debts, if it takes every dollar I possess. But you needn't look to me for any more help in your gambling operations."

Young Gordon writhed under these bitter taunts. But Grace rising up dashed aside her tears, and drawing her stately form to its full height, said

with a calm dignity of which no one before had believed her capable, as she stepped to her husband's side and laid her hand on his shoulder, "Uncle John, you are unmerciful. Frank, let the money go. I believe you did not mean to wrong me or our child. I shall stand by you, let the future bring what it may."

And as her husband, too much moved to speak, threw his arms about her, she turned with a half defiant glance upon the circle gathered around them.

"Yes, Grace, you are right," exclaimed Julia impetuously springing toward her. "You shall share my property. If Frank will now rouse himself, and be a man, in the true sense of the word, I say give him a chance. He has done wrong; but you'll secure more credit to the name, in my opinion, Mr. John Gordon, by trying to help him up, than in heaping reproaches upon him. Hunt is a villain and a sneaking thief, and I know of still more to his discredit. I have always suspected him, and feared he would in some way injure Frank. But I believe that Stokes is no better."

"Who calls my son a villain and a thief?" asked a weak quivering voice, as old Mrs. Gordon tottered into the midst of the excited group, and looked with terror-stricken eyes from one to the other. No one spoke, but in their shocked, averted faces she read the confirmation of what she had partly

overheard, and with a wail of anguish fell prostrate upon the floor.

They carried her to her room, and she soon returned to consciousness, only to realize the full weight of her grief. But why linger over this painful scene? Alas, it has had its counterpart too often.

There followed after this many dark and troubled days. Hunt was traced to his hiding-place, but managed to escape to the wilds north, leaving most of his ill-gotten gains behind, and so all trace of him was lost.

His poor old, broken-hearted mother, lived but a few days to realize his disgrace and cruel desertion. During her illness, Julia watched beside her with almost a daughter's tender care and sympathy. Then she helped Grace prepare to leave Cedar Ridge, promising to accompany her and Frank to a distant city, where he was to begin life afresh.

Mr. Butler purchased both the mansion and the colliery, and announced his intention to make Graham his adopted son and partner in the new firm.

The last morning of Julia's long visit had come, and, rising early, she went out into its dewy freshness to look once more at the beautiful prospect from the cliff overhanging the river. But when she thought of all the changes those months had brought, tears so blinded her eyes that she could

only cover her face with her hands, as she unconsciously spoke aloud her thought, "Oh! there is no spot that will seem so lovely and homelike as this.

"Why leave it, then?" asked a manly voice, that thrilled to her heart. She turned with a quick impulse of flight but Maurice caught her hand, as he exclaimed eagerly, "Don't go, Julia. It has been impossible to see you alone ever since our trip to Hawley. I beg you to remain now and listen to what I have to say." He paused a moment, as if vainly struggling for self-mastery, then continued impetuously, "Julia, you know I love you. My manner must have told you that, although I dared not put it into words. Do you care enough for me, would it be possible that you could come back here again, and be mine?"

She turned her face from him, while a deep flush spread over her cheeks, and then faded as quickly away leaving her very pale. She did not attempt to release her hand, and when she raised her eyes to his, a smile broke through her tears, like the sun through an April cloud. Yet her words still left his fate trembling in the balance, as she said,

"Circumstances have changed, Mr. *Butler*?"

"Julia, it is Maurice Graham who seeks you now, —one who has loved you in spite of circumstances which might have been deemed sufficient to have

checked his presumption. Will you accept him?" he asked, coming still closer to her side.

"Well, if you think that gentleman, with the other name, really cares—"

"Cares? How shall I prove he cares? So?" and he flung his arms about her, and covered her face with kisses.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.



HE long strike was over, and the new firm at Cedar Ridge had little difficulty in filling up its complement of men. Ned Malcome was still overseer, and up at his cottage on the slope of the mountain Bessie Walker was now installed the happy mistress.

It was a beautiful evening in June, and she stood in the doorway shading her eyes from the slanting sunbeams, as she looked down the woodland path to see if Ned was coming. A manly figure was approaching and Malcome was seen just emerging from the trees beyond. With a laughing glance over her shoulder, she called, "Annie, dear, some one here wants to see you." Then catching up her jaunty hat, she darted by their visitor, with a merry "good-evening," on toward her husband, whose arms opened wide to receive her.

Unconscious Annie came to the door to meet Andrew Fuller, and he stepped forward with an alacrity that would never suggest broken limbs, while the reflection from the sunset clouds—or something else—gave a rosy tinge to her face.

Fuller held her hand in a close grasp as he said, "I have come to ask if you will walk up to Biddy Maguire's cottage with me this evening? I haven't been there since that night, you remember."

"I don't know whether I ought to leave mother," she answered hesitatingly.

"Oh! now I'll take no more excuses. That's played out since Ned brought his wife home. Come Annie, I have good news. I couldn't even wait to go home and tell mother."

"Well, I'll get my hat. We won't be gone long?"

"That will depend on how much time it takes to tell my story."

Annie went in, and sought her wraps half eagerly, half reluctantly, for her heart told her pretty plainly what a part at least of Andrew's story would be. When at last she made her appearance, he drew her hand within his arm and they slowly and silently began the ascent.

Annie was too self-conscious to speak, and Andrew, now that the hour which must decide his future happiness had come, felt almost afraid to put it to the test.

At last he said, with deep feeling, "I shall never forget what you did for me on this mountain, Annie. I owe you a debt of gratitude I cannot repay."

She was vexed that he should speak of grati-

tude, and the thought flashed upon her, "perhaps that was all he did feel now. He had certainly seemed to avoid her for some weeks past. Possibly since she had learned to care for him, he had ceased to love her." So she answered coldly, "You needn't feel it a burden, Andrew, I would have done the same for any man in like position."

He turned and looked at her keenly, then dropped her hand, with a heavy sigh, as he said, "I see that I am no more to you than any stranger who might have needed your aid. Oh! this is hard, to wait and hope so long, and now when I have the ability, not only to support those already dependent upon me, but am also free to seek a wife, the woman I love tells me that she cares nothing for me."

"I didn't say that. You are unjust."

"But I want no kind, friendly feelings, and all that bosh," he said, bitterly. "What I want is your heart in exchange for the one which you stole from me years ago. Could you—would you give it me, Annie, dear?" he exclaimed, eagerly, as she turned toward him.

"I lost it some time ago, Andrew," she replied, scarcely above a whisper.

"When? to whom?" he impetuously demanded.

"One dark night, when I listened to the pitiful story of a wounded man."

"Up on this mountain, Annie?"

"Pretty near here," she faltered.

"All right," he cried joyously, tucking her hand again close under his arm; "I think I know who has it now, and he'll keep it, I promise you."

"You said you had some news to tell me," she replied, in an effort to make a diversion and hide her blushing face.

"Truly, but if I haven't told you anything new in saying that I love you, I certainly have heard the best news that ever came to me yet. But what do you think Mr. Butler has done now?"

"O Andrew! it must be something good, by your face," exclaimed Annie, forgetting her embarrassment in sympathy with his joy.

"Yes, Annie, dear; he has found a liberal purchaser for the site of our old mill, and now I am out of debt, and mean to become a prosperous man; and I"—

Here he was interrupted by Biddy Maguire, who suddenly appeared before them, accompanied by a little Irishman, whose head scarcely reached to the top of her shoulder, in a coat so large that it might easily have held another just like him.

"Och! Miss Annie, is that you? An' Misther Fuller, me darlint, how are ye? Faith, an' to see ye now, who would iver belave that I had to carry ye in me two arms, yer face whiter nor me cap this blessed minnet."

"Ah, Bridget, you did me good service then.

Annie and I were just coming up to thank you for that kind deed."

"Sure, then, we'll go back. See here, Pat," she cried, catching her companion by the arm, and whirling him around as if his feet had been set on a pivot. "Miss Annie, here's Patrick O'Brian, from auld Ireland, first cousin on me mither's side. Indade, if he'd been a Maguire, I wouldn't av owned him for a relation if he was me gran'-father."

The little man pulled his fore-lock, and shuffled his feet in an awkward bow, but made no further attempt at acquaintance. Fuller and Bridget took up the conversation, and reviewed in detail all the circumstances connected with the assault upon him, and her efforts to rescue him. After they had rested awhile on the steps in front of her cottage, Fuller remarked to Annie, that as she was anxious about leaving her mother, perhaps they had better be moving toward home.

"Will ye coom inside a minnit fust, Miss Annie?" asked Bridget rising. Annie followed her, and shutting the door she said mysteriously, in a tone that might have answered for a stage whisper, "Miss Annie, will ye do me a favor?"

"Yes, indeed, Biddy. Gladly, if I can."

"It's only would ye ax Misther Graham or Butler, which iver he is, if he's afther wantin' anither blacksmith? Yer see this cousin o' mine han't

got no work, though he's the beautifulest hand at shoein' hosses and mules ye iver seed. I knowed if you shpoke a good word for the poir chap to Misther Graham, it would be all roight."

"Well, Bridget, I'll ask him, or get Ned to speak to him. When did your cousin come?"

"The day before yesterday," she said, with a half embarrassed, half amused chuckle, as she laid her big hand on Annie's shoulder. "An' to tell ye of the impidence of the mon, he's axed me already would I go wid him to the praste, an' becom Miss O'Brian? What do ye think o' that noo, Miss Annie?"

"It must be a case of love at first sight. But he seems to me a rather small man, to undertake such large responsibilities," replied Annie, laughin^g.

"Faith! noo. Isn't it the little parcels that hould the most value, darlint?"

"What answer did you give him, Biddy?"

"I bid him be quit o' his nonsense, as if the loikes o' me would listen to such blarney. But thin, Miss Annie, the poor crathur hasn't a sowl to take care o' him. Yer should have seed the coat he had on him whin he first coom. Indade, an' there were so many holes in it, that all the four winds o' heaven could blow right through it at onst. Ye see, I give him one o' me brither Barney's, an' it fits him as if it were hung on a post, afther me takin' near a foot aff the skirts o' it."

An' Bridget laid back her head, and laughed at her lover's absurd appearance, till the walls echoed with her mirth.

Fuller here impatiently called to know if Annie wasn't most ready? When she joined him, he folded her shawl carefully about her, saying to Bridget, "This little girl is mine now; I must take good care of her."

"Shure, Misther Fuller, it's joking ye are? Bedad! but I thought she was Misther Graham's swateheart. Ye niver know what to expect. This marryin' faver seems catchin'. Ned Malcome begun, an' noo there's no tellin' where it'll end," she added, with a side glance at the little Pat, who was sheepishly shifting from one foot to the other, his hands buried in the unknown depths of his pockets, and a broad smile stretching his mouth from ear to ear. Fuller and Annie bade them a laughing good-night, and then, in utter forgetfulness of the old mother, who was supposed to be so anxiously awaiting their return, the two lovers sauntered slowly through the dewy stillness of mountain paths, with many a rest on mossy rocks, till the setting moon warned them that the witching hour of midnight had almost come.

A few months have passed, and near the close of a perfect day in October, the heroine of our story stands again on the cliffs of Cedar Ridge.

Julia Earle had a few weeks before become Mrs. Graham Butler. And now, for the first time, she is enjoying an autumn among the romantic scenery of Pennsylvania. She sits in the summer-house, with a book lying idly on her lap; a happy smile parts her lips, and her eyes dreamily follow the shifting shadows of white clouds, as they chase each other over the mountains, that have blossomed into every tinge of color from dark russet brown to a blazing flame of scarlet and gold.

By her side, and falling in graceful wreaths over her gray dress, are crimson vines, delicate, cream-tinted ferns, that seem but the phantoms of summer's luxurious growth, and large sprays of maple and oak, with leaves as brilliant as if some fairy's brush, dipped in rainbow dyes, had veined and tinted with infinite variety their glossy surface.

"Oh! oh! isn't it gorgeous?" she exclaimed aloud, feeling that her enjoyment must have some vent.

"I knew you would appreciate our hills, darling," said Maurice, as he came to her side.

Julia sprang up, and the leaves and vines fell unheeded at her feet, while her cheeks vied with the maple in their rosy tinge. Her husband threw his arm about her, and together they walked to the edge of the cliff.

"O Maurice!" she exclaimed again, "I never

knew the beauty of our October before. It seems as if thousands of rainbows had broken loose from the sky, and were running wild through these woods."

"Yes, and they have got twisted all around my little wife. Here is the rose," he said, putting his lips to her cheeks, "and your plaid wrap over that gray dress will answer for the other colors. It is a hopeful sign, dear, harbinger of a bright, sunny future."

"Are not rainbows always associated with storms, Graham?"

"Yes, but then the storm must be passing off, and the sun be shining, even while the rain still falls. So, darling, in our future, if we never lose the light of the Sun of Righteousness from our path, I think we shall find a rainbow of hope spanning the darkest clouds. But come back to the summer-house again. I have a letter I want to read to you. It gives information about poor Ada."

"O Maurice! I have so often thought of her. Is it bad news?"

"Yes, dear. It is a sad ending to a misspent life. The letter is from Dan Malcome, to his brother Ned. He hoping to better his fortunes—went to seek employment in the silver mines of Colorado. Ned gave this to me to-night."

He then sat down on the wooden seat, and draw-

ing his wife close to his side, opened and read the following letter :

“ Well, old fellow, so the strike is ended, and you’ve made a fresh start, and are hard at it again. It was wonderful news your last letters brought me. I congratulate you most heartily on your present happiness and success. I don’t know who is more worthy of it. I’ve tried frontier life and silver mining for nearly five months, and am thoroughly sick of both. One may make more money, but the high prices here use it all up. And then, Ned, to tell the truth, I’ve had enough of lawlessness, under the false name of liberty.

“ As you know, I used to hate Sunday, and going to kirk, above all things. But it seems to me now, the sweetest music I could hear would be the ringing of the church bells, as they used to sound at your quiet mountain home. A mon gets as brutish and stubborn as his mule, where he works in the same tread-mill the week round. Do ye think if I came home the new firm would gie me employment for the winter ?

“ But that’s not what I meant to write now. You remember telling me about a Miss Ada Hunt, cousin of that old scoundrel who robbed the bank ? You said that she ran off, and married Stokes, who was suspected of being mixed up with Hunt.

“About a week ago, I was sent on business some twenty miles from here, over as dreary a country as I ever saw. Night overtook me, and I stopped at a lonely ranch, and found only two women and three or four children, the men being all off somewhere else. The mistress of the house seemed glad to have me remain, and said that there was a strange woman dying there. She said that she seemed like a lady, who had been used to a very different life. I asked her name, and she told me that it was Mrs. Stokes, but that some of her clothes were marked Ada Hunt. She must have been a beauty once, but now she was only a ghost of herself.

“I immediately suspected who it was, and the woman noticing my face, asked if I knew her? I said I thought possibly I knew of her, and who her friends were. Then I asked where her husband was? ‘Oh,’ said the woman with a knowing look, ‘he got in a scrape, was a little too free with other folks’ money, and had to make tracks mighty sudden. Some say he was overtaken and in the scuffle got shot, but I don’t know for sure. He ought to have been hung, shootin’ was too good for him. He left her dyin’, without a cent. I’ve done the best I could. It wan’t much, but poor creatur’ my heart aches for her. Perhaps you could comfort her, if you knowed her folks. She’ll never go farther than her grave.’

"She then took me right into the sick woman's room, and said, 'Mrs. Stokes, here's a man just came who says he knowed you and your folks out East.'

"The woman started up, and gave me such a look I never can forget. 'Who are you?' she asked almost fiercely. 'Dan Malcome, ma'am,' I replied. 'My brother is boss at the Cedar Ridge Colliery.' With a bitter cry, she fell back, and moaned, 'Oh! my sin has found me out. I would rather have died, than that they had ever known of my disgrace. To think that Ada Hunt should have come to this!' she exclaimed, again starting up, and staring at us. But brushing her long hair from her haggard face, she gazed at me steadily, as she said slowly, 'God has sent you. It is well you came.' Then she fell back and lay so still and pale that I thought she was gone. But by-and-by she said in a low, trembling voice, 'Come close, I want to tell you what to write them. My husband deceived me. I did not know he too had robbed the bank. He has proved a villain, and has broken my heart. Still I was to blame in marrying him. I did not love him, and only cared for the wealth he promised me. I deserved my punishment. But it will soon be over now. Here is my wedding-ring. Will you send it to them?'

"Then after a long pause, she said, 'I know your brother was a good man. Have you a

Bible with you? Won't you read the fifty-first Psalm?'

"I took the one you gave me, out of my pocket, Ned, and found the place. After I finished it, she kept slowly repeating, 'Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities,' till the lips ceased moving, and all was over. I stayed to bury her. It was the saddest task I ever had.

"Tell the dear auld mither, that her wayward bairn has since taken that psalm for his prayer. And who knows but that, through God's infinite mercy, both the poor forsaken woman and this prodigal son, now in a far country, will meet in the Father's house with joy and gladness.

"Your affectionate brother Dan."

When Maurice finished reading the letter, Julia had hidden her face on his shoulder, and was weeping with sympathy for the sad fate of the beautiful, accomplished Ada.

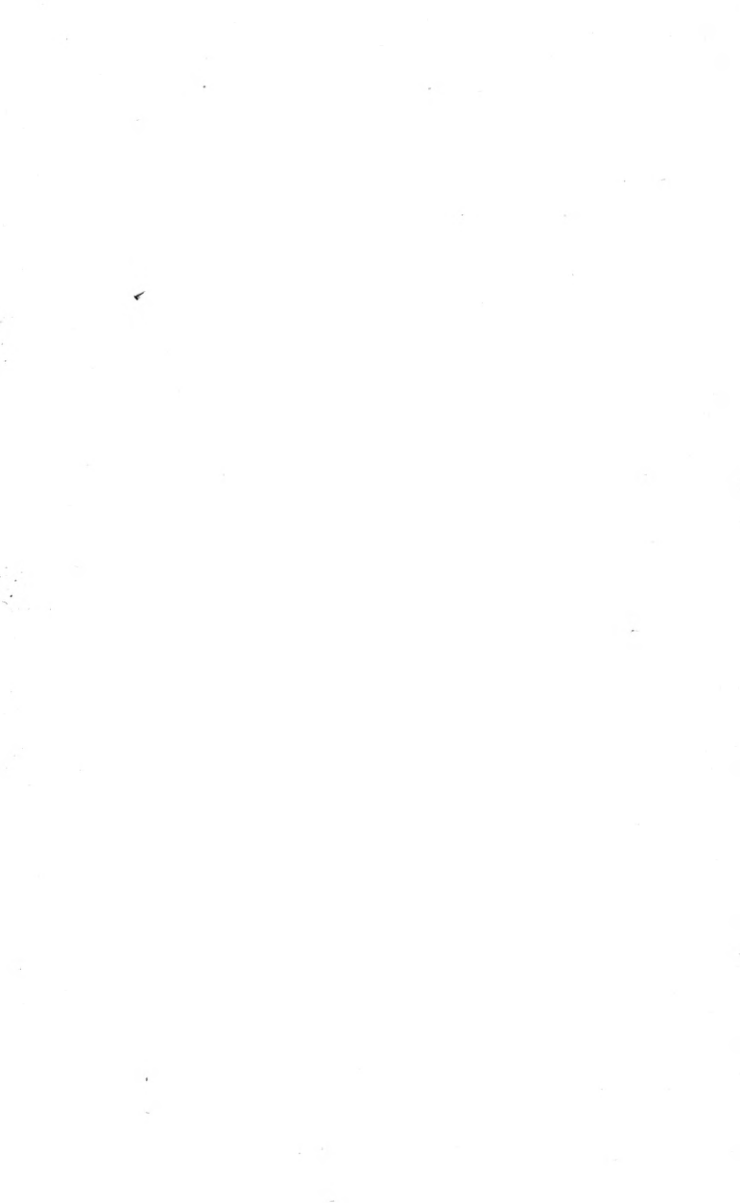
Graham brushed the tears from his own eyes, and tenderly soothed his wife, while he said, "Thank God, there is some light, some hope for her future. Yet what a terrible retribution! But come, little one, the dew is falling, and the air grows chill. We must go in. No doubt the old father and mother are looking for us."

A few hours later, and Mr. and Mrs. Butler were sitting in their easy-chairs, with clasped hands, in

front of a glowing hearth that was no longer lonely ; and sweet strains of music filled the room, as Maurice and Julia's voices blended in the songs the old folks loved best.

And now the curtains of night close around them, and hide them from our gaze, and we say good-night to the friends of Cedar Ridge.

THE END.





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